

ΣΧΗ

EX LIBRIS  
WHITNEY MUSEUM




OF  
AMERICAN ART  
10 WEST 8TH STREET · NEW YORK

920

H91 Sh1







Digitized by the Internet Archive  
in 2012 with funding from  
Metropolitan New York Library Council - METRO

<http://archive.org/details/bostonwill00shan>



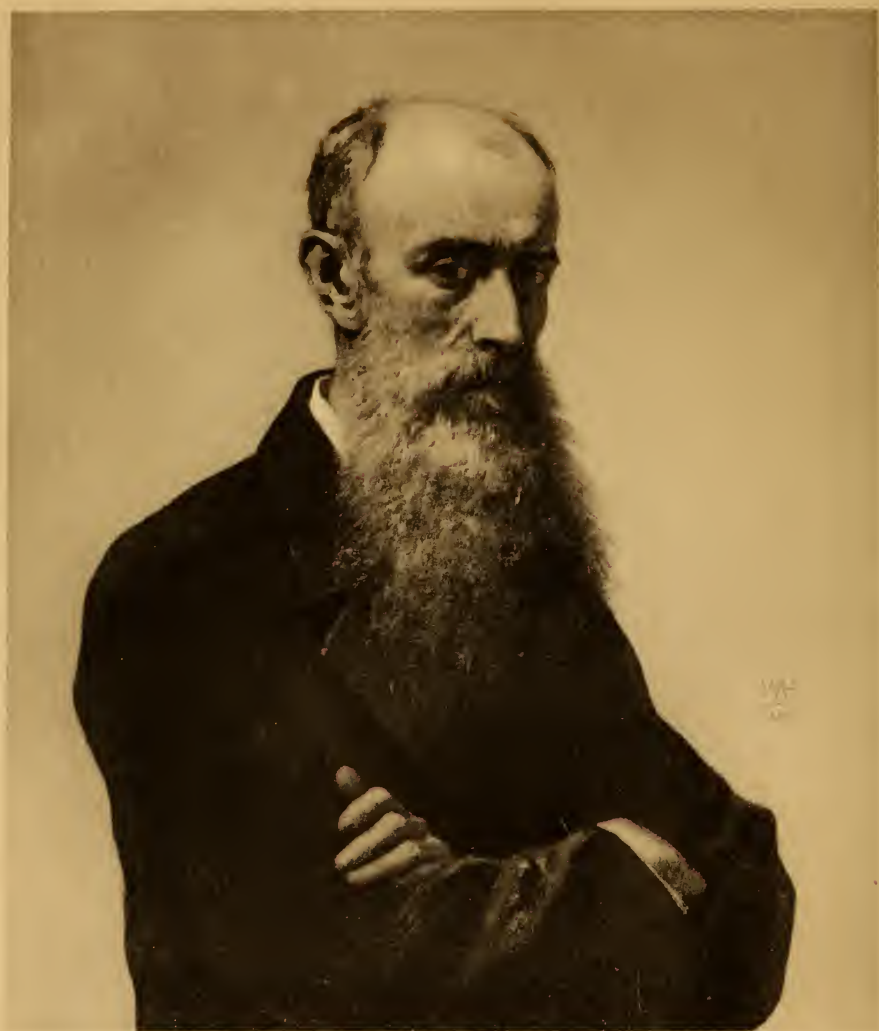
BOSTON DAYS OF  
WILLIAM MORRIS HUNT

*Limited Edition*

FIFTEEN HUNDRED COPIES  
HAVE BEEN PRINTED, OF WHICH  
TWELVE HUNDRED ARE FOR SALE

No. 329



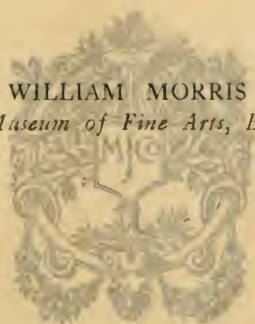




BOSTON DAYS OF  
WILLIAM MORRIS HUNT

BY MARTHA A. E. SHANNON

PORTRAIT OF WILLIAM MORRIS HUNT, BY HIMSELF  
*Museum of Fine Arts, Boston*



BOSTON  
MARSHALL JONES COMPANY

ORIENTAL

1887



Portrait of William Morris Hunt, by Hinckley  
Museum of Fine Arts, Boston

# BOSTON DAYS OF WILLIAM MORRIS HUNT

*by* MARTHA A. S. SHANNON



BOSTON  
MARSHALL JONES COMPANY  
MCMXXIII

1923

COPYRIGHT · 1923  
BY MARSHALL JONES COMPANY

THE PLIMPTON PRESS · NORWOOD · MASSACHUSETTS  
PRINTED IN UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

TO  
MRS. HORATIO NELSON SLATER  
WHOSE WARM INTEREST AND  
GENEROUS CO-OPERATION HAVE  
MADE THIS BOOK POSSIBLE





## PREFACE

**I**N WRITING *this book I have endeavored to recall and present in his true power and worth, that gifted artist and rare and striking personality, William Morris Hunt, who lived and worked in Boston in what have been styled the "yeasty years" of the Sixties and Seventies—years which were marked by unusual intellectual and political development, in which Boston led the way with a roll-call of distinguished historians, scientists, authors and poets, unequalled in the history of our country.*

*In the art history of a people one may read, perhaps, the truest record of their civilization; but we have been repeatedly told that America has no love for art. Those, however, who will turn back to the busy, fruitful years during which Hunt painted and taught in Boston, will certainly discover that the field was promising, that there were many genuine lovers of art who rallied round him and heartily welcomed the new and transforming principles of*

## P R E F A C E

*art which he inculcated. Hunt was a vital force in the development of American art. With the knowledge and skill of a well-trained mind and hand, and with the enthusiasm of a born leader, he gave it a definite direction and character.*

*The appearance of the volume at this particular time is in the nature of a centennial tribute, inasmuch as Hunt was born in 1824—on March 31, in Brattleboro, Vermont. As his life and work are reviewed in the light of what American artists have accomplished in these last hundred years, Hunt's fame suffers no diminution. Few artists have impressed themselves more forcibly on their day and generation.*

*A work of this kind even in a limited field involves obligations to much which has preceded it. The comprehensive "Art Life of William Morris Hunt," by Miss Helen M. Knowlton, which appeared in 1899, is still the chief source of information in regard to the artist. My thanks are due to the publishers, Little, Brown and Company, for their generous permission to draw freely from*

## P R E F A C E

*its pages. I am also indebted to them for material from "Memories of a Musical Career," by Clara Doria (Mrs. Henry M. Rogers).*

*Quotations from Hunt's well-known "Talks on Art," have been allowed by Miss Lucy E. Knowlton, who owns the copyright.*

*Grateful acknowledgment is made to Houghton Mifflin Company, Charles Scribner's Sons, Moffat, Yard and Company, D. Appleton and Company, and the Atlantic Monthly Press for their coöperation in granting formal permission to reprint material. "Boston Painters and Paintings," by William H. Downes, which appeared in the Atlantic Monthly in 1888, has been especially valuable.*

*A Paper by Mrs. Maud Howe Elliott, read before the Newport Historical Society, has furnished interesting facts in regard to Hunt's first studio.*

*I am indebted to the Worcester Art Museum for a Bulletin containing a criticism of "The Bathers," acquired by them in 1910.*

*Various articles on art matters which have ap-*

P R E F A C E

*peared in the Boston Evening Transcript have been drawn upon.*

*Owners of portraits and other works by Hunt, have been most generous in making them accessible for reproduction. Among these are Miss Ida M. Mason, Mrs. Gordon Abbott, Mrs. Henry P. Quincy, Mrs. J. Malcolm Forbes, Mrs. Horatio N. Slater, Mrs. Charles H. Tweed, Mr. Allen W. Evarts, Mr. Walter S. Ballou, Mr. H. V. Long, Mr. R. C. Vose, Mr. Frank W. Bayley, and the Boston Museum of Fine Arts.*

BOSTON

September 25, 1923

## CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
PREFACE . . . . .	vii
I. BOSTON OF THE SIXTIES . . . . .	i
II. STUDENT LIFE ABROAD RETURN TO AMERICA . . . . .	25
III. ESTABLISHED IN BOSTON . . . . .	57
IV. THE HUNT ART CLASS . . . . .	81
V. THE BOSTON FIRE THE PARK SQUARE STUDIO . . . . .	117
VI. A GREAT CALL AND A GREAT SAC- RIFICE . . . . .	137





## ILLUSTRATIONS

✓ PORTRAIT OF WILLIAM MORRIS HUNT, BY HIMSELF (photogravure) . . . . .	Frontispiece
	FACING PAGE
MRS. WILLIAM MORRIS HUNT. <i>From a Daguerreotype</i>	
WILLIAM MORRIS HUNT. <i>From a Photograph.</i> . . . .	4
BIRTHPLACE OF THE ARTIST, BRATTLEBORO, VER- MONT. <i>From a Photograph</i> . . . . .	8
WILLIAM MORRIS HUNT, at the Age of Fourteen. <i>By</i> <i>E. C. Tarbell, from the Original Portrait by His Mother, Mrs. Jon-</i> <i>athan Hunt</i> . . . . .	12
MRS. JONATHAN HUNT AND CHILDREN. <i>Silhouettes.</i> <i>By AUGUST EDOUARD</i> . . . . .	16
✓ PORTRAIT OF HIS MOTHER, BY WILLIAM MORRIS HUNT	20
✓ JEWESS. <i>Painted under Couture.</i> . . . .	24
✓ THE PRODIGAL SON, <i>Painted under Couture</i> . . . . .	28
✓ THE BELATED KID . . . . .	32
✓ HEAD FROM THE FORTUNE TELLER . . . . .	36
FAMILY GROUP. <i>From a Photograph.</i> . . . .	40
✓ GIRL WITH THE CAP . . . . .	44
✓ CHIEF JUSTICE LEMUEL SHAW. . . . .	48
✓ HONORABLE WILLIAM M. EVARTS . . . . .	52
✓ MRS. CHARLES FRANCIS ADAMS . . . . .	60
✓ MASTER FRANCIS GARDNER . . . . .	64
✓ JULIA AND MADELINE, WIFE AND DAUGHTER OF MR. WOOL- SEY BORLAND . . . . .	68
✓ MRS. RICHARD MORRIS HUNT AND CHILD . . . .	72
✓ WOMAN WITH CATTLE . . . . .	76
✓ PORTRAIT HEAD . . . . .	78
✓ MRS. GEORGE W. LONG . . . . .	84

# ILLUSTRATIONS

	FACING PAGE
✓THE LITTLE GLEANER . . . . .	88
✓MR. ALLEN WARDNER . . . . .	92
✓ITALIAN BOY. <i>Charcoal Drawing</i> . . . . .	96
✓MISS IDA M. MASON . . . . .	100
STUDIO OF WILLIAM MORRIS HUNT, PARK SQUARE, BOSTON. <i>From a Photograph</i> . . . . .	104
WILLIAM MORRIS HUNT, BY MISS ROSE LAMB . . . . .	108
✓THE AMAZON. . . . .	112
✓THE BATHERS . . . . .	114
✓NEWBURY PASTURES . . . . .	120
✓GLOUCESTER HARBOR . . . . .	124
✓ANAHITA OR THE FLIGHT OF NIGHT, STUDY FOR THE CAPITOL AT ALBANY . . . . .	128
✓HORSES' HEADS. <i>Charcoal Drawing</i> . . . . .	132
✓THE DISCOVERER, STUDY FOR THE CAPITOL AT ALBANY . . . . .	134
✓PROFILE OF COUTURE. <i>Bronze</i> . . . . .	140
✓MARGUERITE. . . . .	144
✓PORTRAIT OF A LADY . . . . .	148
✓GIRL READING. . . . .	152
✓BIRD ON A CHERRY BOUGH . . . . .	156
✓BUTTERFLIES. <i>Charcoal Drawing</i> . . . . .	158
WILLIAM MORRIS HUNT AT HIS EASEL. <i>From a Photograph</i> . . . . .	162

CHAPTER I  
BOSTON OF THE SIXTIES

“Beauty will not come at the call of a Legislature, nor will it repeat in England or America its history in Greece.

“It will come, as always, unannounced, and spring up between the feet of brave and earnest men.”

—EMERSON

## BOSTON DAYS OF WILLIAM MORRIS HUNT

∴

### CHAPTER I

NO CITY in the country has undergone more makings-over in its topography than Boston, and yet the greatest changes which have taken place have occurred within the last sixty years. It has been said of Boston: "It began its career as a frontier town, with its face towards the Atlantic ocean and its back towards an unexplored wilderness. Whether we consider merely the material growth of Boston, or the important part it has played in the political and intellectual development of our country, the wonder grows that one of the great cities of the world should have sprung from so small and simple a germ." The historic little town of nearly three hundred years ago on its pear-shaped peninsula of little more than 760 acres, has ex-

panded into the greater Boston of today, with an area thirty times as large as the peninsula on which it was built. This increased area has been gained by filling in the marshes and bays on its northern and southern borders, and by the annexation of neighboring suburbs, while the advance in population and prosperity has been proportionate.

The Boston of sixty years ago was a small and simple world as compared with the glare and noise of the present century. There were no subways and no sky-scrapers. The insistent ring of the telephone bell had not yet arrived to interrupt social chat; an elevator was no more thought of than a telephone. There was not a single business house within the city limits tall enough to require an elevator. No automobiles monopolized the narrow streets and sent forth their strident shrieks to warn their victims of approaching disaster. People were sometimes knocked down by cabs or horse-cars, but in a more leisurely and much less savage fashion. "The town had personality, features which gave it distinction. The well-built houses, solid and spacious, had a fine air of dignity and permanence.





MRS. WILLIAM MORRIS HUNT  
*From a Daguerreotype*



WILLIAM MORRIS HUNT  
*From a Photograph*



Against the mellowed brick, iron balconies hung in front of the drawing-room windows. Porticoed and columned doorways, quaint brass knockers, and glass door-knobs, all gave to these old mansions, some of them standing in the midst of beautiful gardens, an atmosphere which no longer exists in Boston or any other American city." They seemed to represent the almost unrealizable idea of genuine home-life in a large city.

Beacon Street was then as now, the most favored residential quarter, "the street that holds the sifted few." The Hancock mansion, terraced high above its wall, stood until 1863. At the corner of Beacon and Park Streets, with its wide view of the Common, was the home of George Ticknor, the distinguished scholar, and author of the "History of Spanish Literature." He is said to have resembled a typical Englishman of the Palmerston period, and carried himself with such an air of conscious importance that Longfellow may have had him in mind when he wrote in his journal in 1853, "Every Bostonian speaks as if he were the Pope." The fine old house which was the scene of lavish hospitality

still stands, but it has been so completely modernized for business purposes that there is little to recall the old-time glory. The splendid marble hall where Lafayette was received in 1824, with its grand staircase, has long since vanished. The group of twenty-four houses known as "Colonnade Row," and built by Bulfinch in 1810, "carried their line of Tuscan porticoes from West to Mason Street." They were of brick, with a row of freestone columns with ornamented capitals, supporting balconies. Amos Lawrence occupied one of these houses.

In Franklin Place was Bulfinch's crescent of the "Tontine Buildings," with the classic urn inscribed to Franklin in the central grass-plot. There was a remarkable architectural quality of quiet and repose in all of the work of Bulfinch, a style representing the man himself and the public men of his day. Daniel Webster lived for a time at the corner of Franklin Place and Summer Street, which well merited its name, with its grand old horse-chestnut trees overarching the driveway, and its beautiful gardens where flowers opened and fruits ripened

in the places now occupied by great stores and warehouses. In the immediate vicinity, were the homes of Edward Everett, the Grays, Gardiners, Bigelows, and many other well-known old Boston families. Boston was like a family, a club, and is so still to some degree. Everybody knew everybody else, for the leading families had intermarried in a way to upset the calculations of the best trained genealogist. Boston was small and provincial, perhaps, but the intimacy of prominent families, the ease and simplicity of social gatherings, accompanied as these were by cultivation and intelligence, for which the town was then gaining its reputation, made it a charming place to live. The people were in keeping with their surroundings and knew how to enjoy themselves. There was plenty of time for good manners and punctilious attention to the details of social etiquette. There was a zest in those balls and parties at which gentlemen appeared in Prince Albert coats and tall hats, which people of today can hardly imagine.

In "Memories of a Musical Career,"<sup>1</sup> Clara

<sup>1</sup> By permission of Little, Brown & Company, Publishers.



Doria (Mrs. Henry M. Rogers) writes, "I think there are only a few left who recall the charm of Old Boston—of Boston as I remember it from 1873 to 1880, when simple living and high thinking were the order of the day; when people were valued for what they were and not for what they possessed; when Boston was still the hot-bed of literature, art, and science in America. In those days Boston had a social atmosphere quite its own and quite unlike that of any other place. True, it was not broad; on the contrary, it was restricted in its outlook; it might, in fact, have been called provincial but for its obvious aspiration to be familiar with and appreciate the better thing. But then of course, as a natural concomitant of these virtues, Boston was self-conscious,—as a sort of self-constituted advance guard of advanced thought.

"The customs of Boston society were something entirely new to me, though as soon as I understood and fell into them I both approved and loved them. It was a bit difficult for me at first to conform to the fashions in dress, as my entire wardrobe rebelled against them. The first musical party I



BIRTHPLACE OF THE ARTIST, BRATTLEBORO, VERMONT

*From a Photograph*





attended with the Dresels was at the home of that great artist, William Morris Hunt, and curiously enough the house inhabited by his family, Number 405 Beacon Street, was considered terribly out of the way in those days. (Only a few buildings dotted the newly filled-in land of the Back Bay.) I remember before arraying myself for my first appearance in Boston society, I asked Mrs. Dresel to select the one of my evening gowns she thought most appropriate to the occasion. She glanced at the assortment with ill-concealed dismay.

“‘My dear, you cannot wear any of these,’ she exclaimed in holy horror. ‘It is not the custom here to wear dresses cut low in the neck as it is in England.’

“As I owned nothing between the usual day and dinner dresses, what was I to do? We finally compromised on a guimpe improvised out of a lace scarf, so that though more gaily attired than the rest, I was at least, impeccably modest. Next day I got Mrs. Dresel to recommend to me a good tailor who fashioned a dress for me properly adapted to correct requirements, which I wore thenceforward at

all private parties, being thus blissfully spared the ever-perplexing question 'What shall I wear?'

"At first I thought that perhaps at some other houses I should find people more elaborately dressed, but no, I noticed at a party at the Brimmers, where one met only the best of the representative Bostonians, the same severity of costume was strictly observed. Every dress was cut in a modest square or V in front with a garniture of some choice lace. The colors selected were always somewhat somber,—black, brown, gray, or sea-green, the materials, however, of velvet, silk, or satin having the dignity of richness and stability.

"Giddy slippers and transparent hose were unknown quantities; neat, well-fitting kid boots were the order of the day. Carriages were always ordered promptly at a quarter before eleven, as after eleven the fare was double. This simplicity made it possible for people with moderate means to entertain frequently, and those Brahmins of the Hub who did not always feel disposed to indulge in carriages could go on foot without destruction to their evening apparel.

"I was struck with the peculiar custom of using the Christian name in lieu of the prefix Mr., Mrs. or Miss. It was Helen Bell, Minnie Pratt, Mary Lodge, Leslie Codman, and so forth.

"How new everything was to me. For instance, the exclusiveness of certain coteries, the ignoring of any one not in their set. I recall that once at a luncheon given by Leslie Codman I was telling of a very charming woman I had met in crossing the ocean. 'Do you happen to know her?' I asked of my hostess. 'She lives in Boston.'

" 'Never heard of her,' was the brisk reply; and from the other end of the table, 'There isn't any such person.'

"With a pleasant smile which was meant to remove any sting from the speech, I remarked, 'In other words, any one not in your set is practically non-existent?' But barring a few such little amiable weaknesses, those intimates of mine were wholly delightful people."

Charming little luncheons and dinner-parties such as Clara Doria mentions, were quite the order of the day. The Boston hostess brought together un-

der her hospitable roof immensely interesting people, fond of discussing every subject under the sun, and placing values upon everything with conscientious accuracy. Moreover these judgments were enlivened by continual sallies of wit. It is perhaps true "that the taste for witticisms is sadly on the wane today, and that if a person should have the temerity to bring one into a modern drawing-room, people would regard it as they would an old snuff-box." This may be because we no longer have such "professional" wits as Oliver Wendell Holmes, or Thomas Gold Appleton, "who spilled more good things on the wasteful air in conversation than would carry a diner-out through a London season," and Judge Hoar, whose every bon mot was recorded and passed around gleefully in their day.

Society which draws its stimulus from good conversation is never dull nor insipid. One can readily understand what endless topics for conversation they found in the creative work of that brilliant coterie of literary men who were making Boston the "Athens of America."



WILLIAM MORRIS HUNT, AT THE AGE OF FOURTEEN  
*By E. C. Tarbell, from the Original by Mrs. Jonathan Hunt*





The Atlantic Monthly was started in 1857, with James Russell Lowell as its editor, and the "Essays of the Autocrat of the Breakfast Table" had begun to appear in it. The first series of the "Bigelow Papers" had been written by Lowell. Emerson, Hawthorne, and Longfellow were at the zenith of their fame. Bancroft, Prescott and Motley had established their reputations as historians. Francis Parkman was writing those books which "tell with such fairness and precision the story of the great struggle between France and England for the possession of this continent, that they can never be superseded as histories." Daniel Webster, Edward Everett, and Wendell Phillips were among the great platform orators. It was the golden age of Boston when authors, poets and historians, walked its streets and gave it enduring fame. Longfellow writes in his journal, "A lovely morning tempted me into town. In the street met Prescott, rosy and young, with a gay blue satin waistcoat, gray trousers and shoes." Perhaps the meeting was near the home of the historian of "Ferdinand and Isabella," 55 Beacon Street, which is still standing with its

white pilasters and balustrades, and light and graceful iron balconies. It was in this house that Thackeray, on his visit to Boston in 1854 when he came to America to lecture on "The Four Georges," saw the two swords over the fireplace which had been carried by ancestors of Prescott in the Revolutionary War, one of them drawn in the service of the king, the other in the patriot cause, and was inspired, as Shackleton tells us in his book on Boston, to write "The Virginians" as a sequel to "Henry Esmond."

In the "Early Years of the Saturday Club," Dr. Edward Emerson has given some fascinating glimpses of the literary lights of Boston, in the informal mingling of club life, around a table in the front room at Parker's Hotel, where they gathered once a month "to eat pie and discourse on celestial matters." Among the original members" of the Saturday Club were Louis Agassiz, Richard H. Dana, Jr., Emerson, Holmes, Longfellow, Lowell, Motley, and Benjamin Pierce, a rare group of literati and scientists which it would be hard to equal anywhere.



The literary eminence of the Boston of this period has never been questioned; what can be said as to the progress of art, that other great factor in a people's onward and upward trend? All that existed at first in this line was mainly derived from the English School of painters, some of whom very early made their way across the sea, and "limned" those quaint effigies which are now the chief ornaments of Historical Societies. There were a few good pictures in Boston from the very beginning, like that of Gov. John Winthrop, attributed to Vandyke, and the portrait of Richard Saltonstall, said to have been painted by Rembrandt in Holland. There were still others by Sir Godfrey Kneller and Sir Peter Lely. In 1737 Boston gave birth to the greatest of her native painters, John Singleton Copley, who delineated the rich dress and vigorous personality of the men and women of the Provincial era with such fidelity that he deserves to rank with Thackeray as a historian of his times. The painting of easel pictures was of slow development, but the love of beauty existed, as displayed in the dignified and harmonious architecture,

wondrously carved old furniture, treasures of glass and china from the Orient, and rich hangings of beautiful color and design. Pictures on those paneled walls would have been superfluous. We moderns feel the need of pictures today to offset our cheaper and too often inartistic household interiors.

Gilbert Stuart, who could paint a head as few artists before or since have been able to do, after painting his masterpiece of Washington, set up his studio in Boston, where he executed many portraits until his death in 1828. Washington Allston was the first American painter to introduce the element of the ideal into his works. "The Gipsy Girl" and "Rosalie" seem now very formal and affected, but they had no prototypes in American Art. He also attempted landscape painting, depicting imaginary scenes the like of which never existed on sea or land. After the fashion set by West, he undertook large historical paintings, like "The Dead Man Raised to Life," in the Philadelphia Academy, and the unfinished fragment of "Belshazzar's Feast," now assigned to a dark corner in the Evans



Mrs. JONATHAN HUNT AND CHILDREN

*By August Edouart*



Wing of the Boston Museum of Fine Arts. In 1831 he occupied a house in Cambridgeport (on the corner of Auburn and Magazine Streets) from which the stage-coach drove every hour to Boston. He was the artistic lion of the Boston of that day, and hailed as the American Titian. During his life there grew up with him as leader, a group of artists of more or less ability. They organized the Boston Artists' Association in 1842, with Allston as its first president.

The Boston Art Club had been organized as early as 1854 with about twenty members who met at first in a small studio in Tremont Row. Joseph Ames was president, and the secretary, Alfred Ordway, was a painter of much ability, and an ardent advocate of any and all schemes looking towards the development of art in Boston. He was one of the earliest and longest tenants of the Studio Building which was completed in 1862, opposite the Granary Burying Ground, on Tremont Street. Many interesting memories of artists cluster around this old structure which was a substantial feature of the artistic life of the city for



more than fifty years. Here artists could not only work together under one roof in a stimulating atmosphere of common interest and sympathy, but were also provided with what was even more necessary, a place to display their works when finished.

The Athenaeum had inaugurated the first attempt ever made in Boston towards establishing a semblance of an art gallery, by placing on view as early as 1826, a collection of casts from ancient sculpture, and continued to hold various exhibitions yearly until its removal from Pearl Street to Beacon Street in 1849. The first exhibition held in the new building, consisted of a display of sixty of Washington Allston's works. But in 1860, the display of pictures for sale in the United States, even in a city so far advanced as Boston, seems to have been attended by some quite crude conditions, as we may judge from an amusing letter written by Fanny Kemble about this time to Sir Frederic Leighton, the English artist, who desired to exhibit some of his works in Boston, under her direction:

"I feel terrified," writes this usually undaunted lady, "when you speak of my determining what is

to be done with your pictures when they arrive in Boston, for assuredly I am utterly incompetent to any such decision.—Here people exhibit their pictures at a shilling a head, i. e. put them in a room hung round with black calico, light up a flare of gas above them, and take a quarter of a dollar from every sinner who sees them.—Pictures of very high pretensions are exhibited, like scenes in a theater, by gaslight, advertised in colored posters all over the streets, like theatrical exhibitions.”

Making all allowance for the overdrawn humor, Boston artists must have welcomed a display-room of their own where they could be masters of the situation, and during a good many years, the gallery was continued successfully under a coöperative league of the artists having their studios here.

Elihu Vedder, in that diverting story of his life, “The Digressions of V,”<sup>1</sup> gives some interesting reminiscences of the Studio Building and his friendship with William Morris Hunt, who established himself in Boston in 1862.

“The good people of Boston—meaning the

<sup>1</sup> By permission of Houghton, Mifflin Company, Publishers.

eminent ones—I had the pleasure of meeting have described themselves mutually so thoroughly that there is nothing I can add; but the thought strikes me, as it has so often in thinking things over, that had I been somewhat older when I was younger, how much more I might have profited by my opportunities. The Studio Building was naturally my headquarters, and as naturally its inmates became my good friends. First came lovable Ames, the portrait-painter, with his great head of curly hair, his handsome, dark, gipsy-looking wife, and Emmie, the daughter. Snell, the architect, had his office in the building, and his partner was that dearest of fellows, Jamie Gregerson. Then I formed a friendship with William Furness, also a portrait-painter, whose early death was such a loss. He painted my portrait for the Academy to go among the Academicians; posing me with my back to the light, my yellow hair gave much the effect that Landor complained of. William Hunt was so identified in my mind with Boston, that to say ‘Hunt’ was to me the same as saying ‘Boston.’ Although he differed from any Bostonian I ever knew, he never





PORTRAIT OF HIS MOTHER  
*Museum of Fine Arts, Boston*



seemed the same out of it. Hunt was one of the most fascinating and lovable men I have ever known. He was also a generous man. On seeing my pictures for the first time, he wrote me a most appreciative and encouraging letter, doing me no end of good, and when I went to Boston he proved in word and deed a sincere friend."

With the return to America of William Morris Hunt in 1855, from a long period of study abroad, interest in painting in Boston took on new life and entered on a new era. His reputation had been fully established before his arrival by those of his paintings which he had exhibited at the Paris Salon for a number of years, and when he finally settled down in Boston in 1862, to remain for the rest of his life, he exerted so great an influence that it is not too much to say that Hunt was the most vital factor in the development of American art, in the middle of the last century.

He was unmistakably a striking figure in the Boston of the Sixties and Seventies. Not unlike an Arab sheik in appearance, tall and sinewy, with a fine head, long gray beard, and brilliant eyes, he

was by far the most distinguished-looking personage in any assemblage. An Oriental in the West, Dr. Cyrus A. Bartol once styled him. When Hunt spoke everybody stopped to listen, sure of hearing something well worthy of attention whatever subject might be up for discussion, whether matters of art or of everyday interest. He was quick and alert in manner, overflowing with life and vivacity, a wonderful raconteur and even mimic, everything became dramatic in his handling. In his later years in his studio in a serious mood, with his round cap and velvet coat, he was singularly reminiscent of Titian's portrait of himself.

There is no doubt that Hunt was a rarely gifted artist and tremendously in earnest in his work, but he also possessed the rare and happy faculty of communicating to others much of his own enthusiasm and devotion to artistic ideals. During nearly twenty years he lived and worked in Boston, and rendered an incalculable service to the cause of art at a time when the field was white for the harvest. Here his best works were executed and he inspired and stimulated an intelligent and en-

thusiastic interest in the development of American art which placed Boston for the time in the lead as an art center. Pupils flocked to his studio, especially women, who up to this time had had no opportunity to obtain any such instruction as he gave so forcibly and generously to all who came under his influence. His fellow-artists and patrons of art generally gathered about him with hearty sympathy and admiration.

Frederic Vinton, the portrait-painter, who knew him well, said of Hunt, "I shall always remember how he looked under the sky-light in the old Mercantile Building on Summer Street, illustrating with a rough little cast from the Column of Trajan in his hand the principle of breadth in treating light and shade. He taught me in five minutes the principle of perhaps the greatest importance in painting; and although I never came under his influence to the extent which some young aspirants in art have since enjoyed, I am nevertheless proud to say that I consider myself his pupil; for I am sure I should have done nothing without his encouragement."



BOSTON DAYS OF WILLIAM MORRIS HUNT

As a teacher of painting Hunt not only stood first as to reputation, but he was actually first in point of time, for speaking generally he had no predecessors. The powerful influence he exerted was not so much because of the originality of his art, as on account of the force of his personal character, which in a city where personality has a charm unusual in our country, conveyed the impression of genius, and gave weight to whatever he said and did. Moreover, when the hour had arrived for a new period in art, the first step in that direction was taken by him. Hunt had the good fortune to introduce here an entirely new element, the methods of one of the greatest masters of modern times, Jean François Millet. He was the pioneer in starting a movement of the greatest importance in American art, an abiding French influence, as represented by the Barbizon School. In his "Story of American Painting" Charles H. Caffin calls the Barbizon men, "Nature poets, because their works interpreted their own souls in terms of nature." They put spirit in its proper relation to nature.



JEWESS

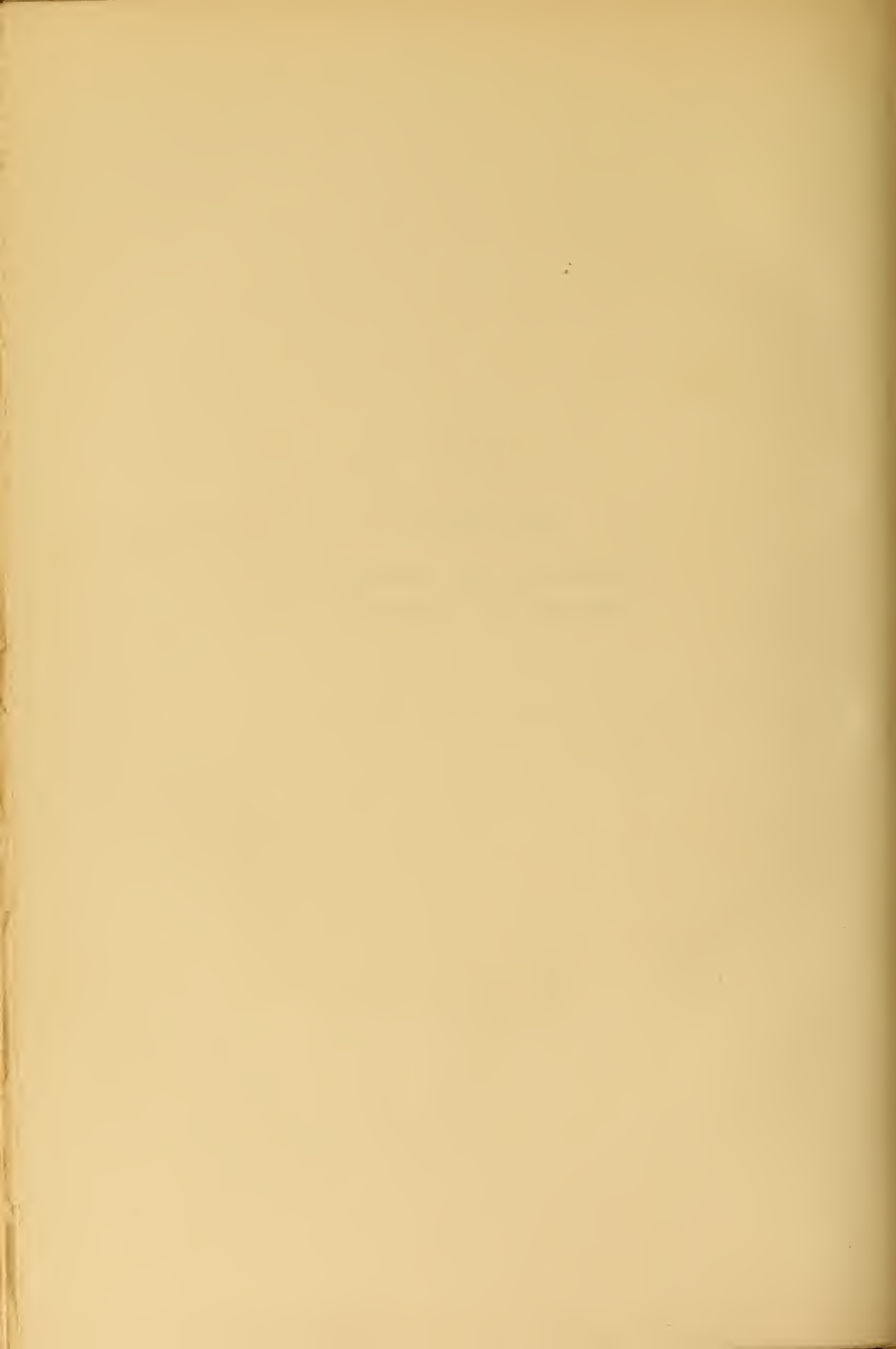
*Painted under Couture. Museum of Fine Arts, Boston*





CHAPTER II

STUDENT LIFE ABROAD  
RETURN TO AMERICA



## CHAPTER II

**W**ILLIAM MORRIS HUNT was born in Brattleboro, Vt., March 31, 1824. The centenary of his birth will be here in 1924, suggesting the already venerable roots of American art. He came of an honorable New England ancestry. His family for several generations had been closely identified with the history of the Green Mountain State. His grandfather, Jonathan Hunt, rendered distinguished civil and military service during the Revolutionary War. As Lieutenant Governor of Vermont, he did much to promote the foundation of the State government, and bring about its union with the other States.

The father of the artist was Hon. Jonathan Hunt, a son of Lieutenant Governor Hunt. He graduated from Dartmouth College in 1807, studied law and practiced successfully in Brattleboro, and was honored with a judgeship. He married Miss Jane Leavitt, a daughter of Judge Leavitt of Suf-

field, Connecticut. There were five children; a daughter, Jane, and four sons. The eldest was William, the artist; John studied medicine, Leavitt followed the law, and Richard, who was the youngest, became a distinguished architect.

The old Hunt mansion was one of those delightful homes of a past generation noted for comfort and hospitality, which are fast disappearing in New England. Surrounded by fine old trees and a famous garden, it was long a prominent landmark in the town, and old residents of Brattleboro viewed with the keenest regret the changes which it suffered in later years in the march of modern business development.

Judge Hunt was elected Representative to Congress in 1827, and served his State with distinction. He died in Washington in 1832.

Left a widow with five children to educate, Mrs. Hunt determined that they should have the best advantages possible. She removed with her family from Brattleboro to New Haven. She was a woman of fine presence and much natural ability, with a decided talent for painting. Her early ef-



THE PRODIGAL SON

*Painted under Couture. Museum of Fine Arts, Boston*





forts in this direction, however, had been discouraged by her father with the severe injunction, "Do no more of this." She found in New Haven an artist by the name of Gambadella, an Italian refugee, who was looking for portraits to paint or pupils to instruct, and at once engaged him to give herself and her children drawing and painting lessons. An oil portrait of her son William at the age of fourteen years, which she executed, would do credit to a more practiced hand.

As the children grew older they were sent to the best schools in the country. William fitted for Harvard at Mr. William Welles' school in Cambridge, and entered college at sixteen. His lessons were easily learned, but made little impression upon him. He was not interested in his studies. His artistic temperament showed itself in his love for nature, music and drawing. He sketched continually and gave away his work to all who cared for it. He left college in his junior year, and as his health was delicate, his mother decided to go with him to the south of France, taking her other children, in order to give them the advantages of

study abroad. People did not then go abroad to study, and Mrs. Hunt was regarded as venturesome in the extreme, and her friends did their best to discourage her. She said of this journey in later years, "I did not realize what I was doing until I was half-way across the ocean, and the greatness of the undertaking was indeed oppressive, yet there was no way but to go on." After some months of travel, the family settled down in Rome for a time, and William drew in the studio of the American sculptor, Henry Kirk Brown, where he copied the Naples "Psyche," restoring the head as he imagined it might have been in the original. His work was so good that his mother ordered it to be put in marble. Such was his interest in art that a return to Harvard College was given up and the plans of the family were wholly changed. The two youngest sons were placed at school in Geneva, remaining there until Richard Hunt had begun his work as an architect.

Thomas Gold Appleton, of Boston, art connoisseur and traveler, met the Hunts in Rome and journeyed with them. He wrote his father, in the

spring of 1845,<sup>1</sup> "At length I am off for Greece, a rather rapid visit as I dread the hot weather, and a run to Constantinople. I shall have the company of a pleasant family from Ancona to Corfu, if not farther, the Hunts of Brattleboro, whom you know. William is in a fair way to be a sculptor."

Intending to continue his study of sculpture, William was advised to go to Düsseldorf, then considered the art center of Europe. In that city his surroundings were most agreeable, and among his friends were Lessing, the president of the Academy, Leutze and others. At this time Lessing was painting his picture, "The Martyrdom of John Huss," and selected the head and figure of Hunt as a model for the martyr. He found, however, the rigid system of teaching so irksome, that he did not remain here but a few months. He believed then and all his life that the study of art should be a pleasure and not a forced drill.

He left for Paris with the intention of entering the studio of Pradier, famous for his sitting figure

<sup>1</sup> "Life and Letters of Thomas Gold Appleton," by Susan Hale. By permission of D. Appleton and Company, Publishers.

of Molière in the rue Richelieu. While waiting for the opening of the class in modeling, he roamed about the city searching out every possible object of artistic interest. He chanced to see one day in the window of an art store, Couture's "Falconer," now in Berlin. The picture so fascinated him that he declared, "If that is painting, I am a painter."

Thomas Couture studied first with Delaroche, but he soon broke away from any school or particular teacher. He really began the semi-classical movement with his picture of "The Decadence of the Romans." A classic subject, but treated with freedom and rich coloring, it shows a realism far beyond the academic work of the time. Daring enough to picture reality, pupils thronged to him from every quarter of the globe, and he left a deep and enduring impression on every one of them. Couture never failed to hold his pupils up to the highest ideals, even if he fell short of reaching them himself. Hunt worked in Couture's studio with energy and enthusiasm, and "Morris" as he was called, was a great favorite. He mastered Couture's method so completely that his fascinating





THE BELATED KID  
*Museum of Fine Arts, Boston*





head of "The Jewess" which was standing upon an easel one day, was thought by the painter, Isabey, to be the work of Couture himself.

While a student, Hunt proposed to Couture that they should make a tour of the provinces and paint portraits of the peasants at ten dollars a head for the purpose of education and amusement. Couture was delighted at the idea, but after a week of reflection he changed his mind. "It would never do," he said, "the picture dealers would make money out of us." He was always anxious lest these men should make money from his pictures, which deprived him to a large extent of their aid in distributing his paintings. Continually overestimating himself, his importance in the art world, and his own work, he was apt to underestimate others and their work. An ardent admirer of the old masters, seeing as they saw and trying to paint as they worked, Couture had little intimacy with real out-of-doors nature, and consequently no sympathy with the new School to which Millet belonged. Many years after Hunt left Paris, he inquired of an American artist visiting his studio how Hunt

was getting on and what he was doing. The reply was that he was engaged mostly in portrait-painting, and doing some excellent work. "Yes, yes," said Couture, "no doubt he is doing fine things. He has talent, but what did he run off to study with that fellow in Barbizon for? Why, that Millet paints peasants so poor that they have not even a wrinkle in their trousers."

Millet's wonderful "Sower" was exhibited for the first time in the Salon of 1850. Hunt was greatly impressed with it, and asked a French art dealer why he did not buy the picture. The man replied the subject was too sad, and besides it was by no means worth the 300 francs asked for it. "You hesitate about buying a masterpiece for \$60!" exclaimed Hunt, who at once paid the money and became the fortunate possessor of one of Millet's greatest works.

Millet painted at Barbizon in 1849. He worked so impetuously on his first picture of the "Sower" that having reached the end of his drawing, he found the canvas was too short. He traced the lines of the figure exactly, and produced the twin

brother which appeared in the Exhibition that opened at the end of 1850. The scene is laid in Millet's native Gruchy, and one of its peasants is depicted, a young fellow of wild aspect, dressed in a red shirt and blue breeches, his legs wrapped in wisps of straw, and his hat torn by the weather. With a proud and serious step he finishes his task on the steep fields in the midst of a flock of crows, which fly down upon the grain. "Sowing is a serious business among agricultural people. When a man puts on the white grain bag, rolls it around his left arm, fills it with seed, the hope of the coming year, that man exercises a sort of sacred ministry. He says nothing, looks straight before him, measures the furrow, and with a movement cadenced like the rhythm of a mysterious song, throws the grain which falls to the earth and will soon be covered by the harrow." The rhythmic walk of the Sower and his action are superb. It is said some sowers, before they put foot upon the field, toss a handful of grain into the air in the sign of the Cross; then stepping upon the field they pronounce, in a low voice, some indistinct words which sound like a prayer. All

the significance which there has ever been for mankind in that primeval action of sowing the seed Millet has crystallized into its necessary expression. But the new rustic art of the peasant painter roused in some minds a whole world of political and social problems. "The Sower" cursed the rich, they said, because he flung his grain with anger! Though the critics scoffed and Couture ridiculed Millet's pictures, Hunt fully recognized his genius, and bought so many of his works that the notion was started in Paris that a rich Englishman was buying up all his pictures. People became alarmed and began to come to Barbizon, to get from him what they could, and Millet's prospects brightened. Hunt not only bought many of Millet's paintings for himself, but persuaded his friends to do so, and it is largely owing to his influence that so many of the masterpieces of this great French artist came into the possession of Boston homes and galleries.

Mr. Martin Brimmer bought a number of Millets in the early Fifties through Hunt's recommendation, all of which pictures now hang on the walls





HEAD FROM THE FORTUNE TELLER  
*Museum of Fine Arts, Boston*





of the Boston Museum of Fine Arts. In 1917, Mr. Quincy A. Shaw bequeathed to the Museum his famous collection of Millets consisting of twenty-six oil paintings, including the original "Sower," twenty-seven pastels, and several etchings. This collection contains the largest number of this painter's works in one place, and shows the master's art on so many sides and on so high a level as to make the Boston Museum now and in the years to come a place of pilgrimage for all those who desire to study Millet as one of the greatest men of the Naturalistic School.

Hunt showed his contempt for those who would not or could not recognize the genius of Millet by moving out to Barbizon and wearing a blouse and sabots like the powerful peasant painter himself. Hunt spent two years at Barbizon, making for himself a comfortable home where a number of American artists, among whom were Wyatt Eaton, Edward Wheelwright, and Will H. Low, came to visit him. There was thus formed a sort of colony of artists, fervent disciples of Millet, who by their purchases lightened his poverty.

When Millet first went to live at Barbizon, he took a little farm house with three narrow, low rooms, which served as studio, kitchen and bedroom for his wife and his three children; later when the children increased to nine, the little house was lengthened by two other rooms, a studio was built at the end of the garden, and Millet added a wash-house and a chicken-yard in the middle of the garden which was leased to him. In the morning he dug or planted, sowed or reaped. After lunch he went into the low, cold, dark room called a studio. When Hunt first found him here, "painting in a cellar," the picture on his easel was "The Sheep Shearers," exquisite in color as a Correggio, and with all the pathos and grandeur of a Michelangelo. Hunt said, "When I saw that picture I knew that I must have it. I gave \$90 for it. Millet never touched any of the money. The man from whom he had bought his colors had written that he must either send him some money or a painting; so I paid the man \$90, and took a receipt for the bill. When I thought that the picture was done,—when any one would have thought so,—he was still dis-

satisfied with the girl's left hand, which pulls back the fleece from the shears. He thought that it had not the right action; so he kept it ten days longer. Whenever I went to see him, he was still at work upon it. I asked him why he put no wrinkles or markings into the girl's cap. He said because he was trying to make it look like a tea-rose leaf. And this was the man whom the critics call careless and slovenly!" "The Sheep Shearers" was purchased from Hunt by Mr. Peter C. Brooks of Boston, who gave it to his daughter, Amy, as a wedding present on her marriage with Mr. Richard M. Saltonstall. It was exhibited in the Salon of 1853 and received a second-class medal.

From the time Millet went to Barbizon in 1849 he gave to his pictures an elevation, a largeness, which have made him unique in French art, one who spoke a language hitherto unheard. The echo of country life, its eclogues, its hard work, its anxiety, its misery, its peace, the emotions of the man bound to the soil,—all these he knew how to translate, and proved that "the trivial can be made to serve the sublime."

The strong, broad generalization of Millet and his sincere and simple adherence to truth, appealed forcibly to Hunt. While Couture was art all the time, Millet began with Nature and ended with art. Of Millet, Hunt said: "His pictures have infinity beyond them.—When I came to know Millet I took broader views of humanity, of the world, of life. His subjects were real people who had work to do. If he painted a haystack it suggested life, animal as well as vegetable, and the life of man. His fields were fields in which men and animals worked; where both lay down their lives; where the bones of the animals were ground up to nourish the soil, and the endless turning of the wheel of existence went on. He was the greatest man in Europe. I give you his poetical side; but he was immense, tremendous, so great that very few could ever get near him."

Twenty years after Hunt's death, Carolus Duran at a reception given by the French ambassador at Washington, asked to be presented to Mrs. Hunt Slater, a daughter of the painter. "I wish to know," he said, "the daughter of the great Ameri-





FAMILY GROUP

*From a Photograph*





can to whom France owes a deep debt of gratitude for having recognized and brought to our notice that splendid bouquet of our own painters who formed the Barbizon School."

The years from 1850 to 1855 were filled by Hunt with happy, earnest and successful work. He occupied a studio at 3 rue Pigalle, in the Montmartre quarter of Paris. To this period belong "The Prodigal Son," "The Fortune-Teller," "The Marguerite," and "The Hurdy-Gurdy Boy" with its half-mirthful, half-musical vivacity, full of irresistible simplicity. The latter was the first of Hunt's pictures sold in America, purchased by Mr. Edmund Dwight of Boston. He exhibited in the Salon of 1852, the only American artist represented that year. He exhibited again in the Salons of 1853 and 1855.

Hunt returned to America in 1855, and soon after married Miss Louisa Dumaresq Perkins, a granddaughter of Colonel Thomas Handasyd Perkins, one of Boston's foremost merchants, who founded the house of Perkins & Co., in China, the second largest American firm in that country. The Per-

kins Institution for the Blind, which he established, perpetuates his name for all time, as a great philanthropist.

Hunt spent the first year of his married life in his old home, Brattleboro, Vt., and then removed to Newport, R. I. The winter of 1857-1858, however, was passed with friends in the Azores.

It might be interesting to speculate as to what would have been the result if Hunt had remained permanently abroad, shaping his art more and more under the spell which Millet had begun to exercise over him. Doubtless his fame would have been greater as an artist, but he would have missed the honor of accomplishing a work of the greatest importance to the art of his own country, in bringing to it the revitalizing influences of that movement in France in the first half of the last century, which has gone on its brilliant way completely changing methods and ideals in modern art. Like every man called to a certain work, at the appointed time Hunt was moved by some mysterious impulse to draw near the scene of action.

Writing to his mother from Newport in November 1856, Hunt says:

"I think the advantages of the right kind of society, climate, and geographical position make this the most suitable place for us to choose as a residence. I have bought a house here, Dick may remember it, on the opposite side of the street from Mr. King's place, just opposite the old Jew burying-ground—an old-fashioned, bluish gray house placed back in the yard some distance from the road, with several trees about it. It is both a pleasant summer and winter home, has been well built and is in excellent repair." The house now forms part of the Hill Top Inn in Newport.

His fame as a portrait painter had preceded him, and he was at once busily employed in executing many portraits among the summer colony, which represented a number of well-known Bostonians. Hunt mentions among his sitters, Mrs. T. Jefferson Coolidge, Mrs. Upham, Mrs. Randolph Coolidge, Mrs. Samuel Ward, and Miss Bangs, and says, "I only wish the people were not in such a hurry. They all want to get back to town, and

never want to begin the sittings early in the summer."

The studio which he occupied in Church Street was large and commodious. The building was of two stories and had a carriage house and stalls for horses. It is still standing and occupied in the summer by New York artists. Among the pictures which Hunt painted here was the "Belated Kid," a charming composition after the manner of Millet. He painted it twice and one example is now in the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston.

In "Some Recollections of Newport Artists," a paper read before the Newport Historical Society, by Mrs. Maud Howe Elliott, are the following notes taken from Mrs. Samuel Powel's manuscript reminiscences:—

"There are still living some people in Newport who remember accompanying their parents during their sitting to Hunt. He began (to work) at about ten A. M. After a couple of hours, or less, Mrs. Hunt would send or bring a tray with some wine and delicious quaint little Buckeye cakes made from a receipt they had brought from Fayal.



GIRL WITH THE CAP  
*Museum of Fine Arts, Boston*







Down went his brushes, his wife and the sitter perched on the long divan covered with an Algerine rug. Mr. Hunt flew nimbly to the stairway, glass and cake in hands, and called to the students, who worked in the lower studios: 'Miss Gibbs, La Farge, come up.'

"There was meaning in this. His sittings, he claimed, always improved after the sitter had eaten and drunk. The jaws relaxed, the face became more natural and the last half of the sitting gave the most successful work—

"At the house of Mr. Morgan Gibbs, as an interlude to some tableaux which he helped to pose, Hunt's head and arms danced a ballet. The head of course, grotesque, in a masque, the legs and feet represented by his arms and hands, which he concealed with pink silk stockings and satin slippers, every pose replete with grace and abandon."

"My own early impressions of Hunt," Mrs. Elliott states, "recall a dazzling personality. He was a brilliant, polished man of the world, and at the same time a sensitive, passionate, generous artist, a rare combination. The first time I remem-

ber seeing him (save for a hazy recollection of the ballet just described, which I either saw or heard my mother tell about) was at his place in Readville, near Boston. He had built the barn before the house, and the family were living in its airy interior. My mother and I went out one hot July day to visit the Hunts. As we drew near the barn, a wagon laden with new-mown hay creaked down the lane, drawn by two milk-white oxen, and drew up beside the stable. High up at the open door of the loft we saw Hunt standing, pitchfork in hand. He quickly threw off his wide-brimmed hat and studio blouse, stepped out upon the top of the load and began to work vigorously at putting in the hay. Through a whirl of gray beard, hair and wildly tossed hay, shone three bright points of light, Hunt's keen dark eyes and the diamond he always wore on his little finger.—Many of our old houses still contain Hunt's own lithographs of some of his most famous pictures. Some of them he made at Newport. Among them are the "Street Musician," the "Girl at the Fountain," and the "Child Selling Violets."

In 1859 John La Farge came to Newport and began to work with Hunt in the Church Street Studio. At an exhibition held by the Art Association in 1913, Miss Theodora Watson was an interested visitor. She seemed troubled to find that the entrance through the paved court was used rather than the small door on the other side.

“ ‘When I worked here with Hunt, we always came in through this door,’ Miss Watson declared. ‘My easel stood here, and John La Farge’s there, Henry and William James were on the other side.’ ”

The James family, after a long stay in Europe, had settled down in Newport in 1860, finding it “the one right residence, in all our great country for those tainted, under whatever attenuations, with the quality and the effect of detachment. The effect of detachment was the fact of the experience of Europe.” The family were making the best of this noted watering-place as a marked point of re-attachment to America, in which heroic effort, they were greatly aided by the fact that here was the artist, William Hunt, in whose studio young William James, who at this time was bent upon an ar-

tistic career, could obtain the best instruction anywhere in the country. Henry James, who "under an irresistible contagion haunted his studio for a shorter stretch," thus describes the artist in "Notes of a Son and Brother":<sup>1</sup> "William Hunt, for that matter, was already a figure unmistakable, superficially speaking unsurpassable, just as John La Farge already was seen to be. In the studio I was at the threshold of a new world,—into the world so beautifully valid the master would occasionally walk inquiring as to what I had done or would do, but bearing on the question with an easy lightness, a friendliness of tact, a neglect of conclusion, which it touches me still to remember. It was impossible to me at that time not to so admire him that his just being to such an extent, as from top to toe, and in every accent and motion, the living and communicating Artist, made the issue, with his presence, quite cease to be of how one got on or fell short, and became instead a mere self-sacrificing vision of the picturesque itself, the constituted picturesque

<sup>1</sup> "Notes of a Son and Brother"; copyright, 1914, by Charles Scribner's Sons. By permission of the Publishers.



CHIEF JUSTICE LEMUEL SHAW

*Court House, Salem, Massachusetts*







or treated subject in efficient figure, personal form, vivid human style—William Hunt, all muscular spareness and brownness and absence of waste, all flagrant physiognomy, brave bony arch of handsome nose, upwardness of strong eyebrow and glare, almost, of eyes that both recognized and wondered, strained eyes that played over questions as if they were objects and objects as if they were questions, might have stood, to the life, for Don Quixote, if we could associate with that hero a far-spreading beard already a little grizzled, a manner and range of gesture and broken form of discourse that was like a restless reference to a palette, and that seemed to take for granted all about, canvases and models and charming, amusing things, the ‘tremendously interesting’ in the seen bit or caught moment, and the general unsayability, in comparison, of anything else. He never would have perched, it must be added, on Rosinante—he was fonder of horses even than the method of Couture, and though with a shade of resemblance, as all simple and imaginative men have, to the knight of La Mancha, he least suggested that analogy as he passed in a spinning

buggy, his beard flying, behind a favorite trotter.

"Pupils at that time didn't flock to his gates—though they were to do so in Boston, during years, later on; an earnest lady or two, Boston precursors, hovered and flitted, but I remember for the rest (and I speak of a short period) no thorough-going élèves save John La Farge and my brother. I remember, for that matter, sitting quite in solitude in one of the gray cool rooms of the studio, which thus comes back to me as having several, and thinking that I might get to copy casts rather well, and might in particular see myself congratulated on my sympathetic rendering of the sublime uplifted face of Michelangelo's "Captive" in the Louvre. I sat over this effort and a few others for long, quiet hours, and seemed to feel myself again aware, just to that tune, of how happy I ought to be. No one disturbed me; the earnest workers were elsewhere; I had a chamber of the temple all to myself, with immortal forms and curves, with shadows beautiful and right, waiting there on blank-eyed faces for me to prove myself not helpless; and with two or three of Hunt's fine things, examples of his work

in France, transporting me at once and defying. I believed them great productions—thought in especial endless good of the large canvas of the girl with her back presented while she fills her bucket at the spout in the wall, against which she leans with a tension of young muscle, a general expression of back beneath her dress, and with the pressure of her raised and extended bare arm and flattened hand; this, to my imagination, could only become the prize of some famous collection, the light of some museum, for all the odd circumstance that it was company just then for muddled me and for the queer figures projected by my crayon.”

It was in the spring of 1859 that John La Farge began to study with Hunt in his Newport atelier. He had already worked with Couture in Paris, and knowing of Hunt's reputation as a favorite and brilliant pupil of this French master, he wished to continue the methods he had learned from him. La Farge has written of this period in his life as follows:—<sup>1</sup> “But a disappointment was in store

<sup>1</sup> “John La Farge, A Memoir and Study,” by Royal Cortissoz. By permission of Houghton, Mifflin Company, Publishers.

for me, and it was this,—that Hunt had abandoned the practice of Couture, and was painting in a manner which, however interesting to me, was not what I had come to get. But his general influence was so good, and the pleasure of devoting almost all my time to painting as a task under a teacher, kept me satisfied with my momentary position. And there was always something to learn from a new man whom I liked, to learn or to share with him, for we found more and more common admirations. He introduced me to the knowledge of the works of Millet, of which he had many, including the famous “Sower,” and many drawings, and more especially to the teachings, the sayings, and the curious spiritual life which a great artist like Millet opens to his devotees. Every day some remark of Millet’s was quoted, some way of his noticed, some fact of his life was told; he was, in this way, in those studios, a patron saint. Notwithstanding, though I even copied a Millet or two, I was firmly resolved against following him either with or without Hunt, in the methods which were developed by the great Frenchman. His previous methods, which one sees



HONORABLE WILLIAM M. EVARTS  
*Charcoal Drawing. Owned by Mrs. Charles H. Tweed*





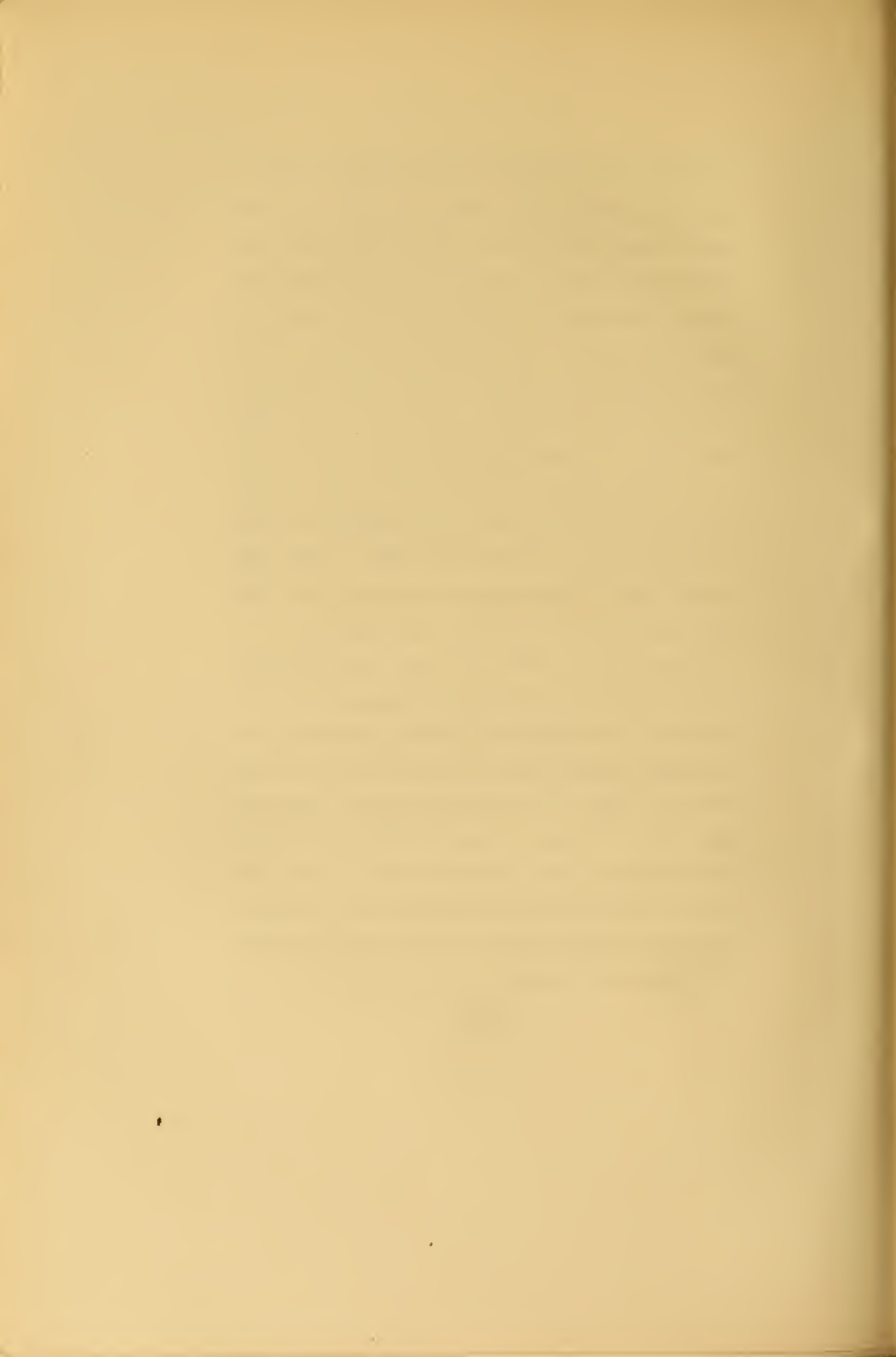


more distinctly in some of his landscapes, and, of course, in his early work, were nearer what I had been looking for, however less poetic and more commonplace they might be, but my aim was study and the acquaintance with methods of work that would connect generally with the past, not with new formulas which were abridgments. So that to some extent I had to fight out my own issue, and Hunt and I disagreed, but we had so many common beliefs, and Hunt's was so charming a mind, that often he was the first and only one to praise me when I departed from his method, as from his general views. All this refers to landscape more particularly, because the closed light of the studio is more the same for every one, and for all day, and its problems however important, are extremely narrow, compared with those of out-of-doors. There I wished to apply principles of light and color of which I had learned a little; I wished my studies from nature to indicate something of this, to be free from recipes, as far as possible, and to indicate very carefully, in every part, the exact time of day and circumstances of light. This of course

is the most ambitious of all possible ideas, and though attempted to some extent through several centuries from time to time, it is only recently that all the problems have been stated, in intention at least, by modern painting. In a certain way Hunt recognized the value of the ideas and the value of their result, but his aim was quite the other way; and that was to find the *recipe* which would be sufficient for noting what he wished to do. Herein he was following the steps of Millet, but as Millet himself objected to him, 'That is all very good, but what have you got to say with it?' This is not to say that Hunt had not a right to do whatever he wished in such a way, especially as for him in general the future was mainly as the past, in representing figures and portraits, and he gave up the entire question of the place in which the figures lived, air and light and space. We used to talk, however, about it all—Hunt thought it useless to carry the refinement of tone and color to the extent which I aimed at in my studies, telling me that there would not be one in a hundred artists capable of appreciating such differences of accuracy—their eyes and their

training would not be sufficient. This objection seemed to me, as I told him, exactly the reason why I should, for certain, aim at these variations from recipe. So much the better, if only one man in a thousand could see it; I should then have exactly what I wanted in the appeal to the man who knew and to the mind like mine. The first and special work I did according to my liking was a few months after coming to Hunt. The first distinctive paintings were a couple of landscapes painted in 1859, and perhaps as late as January 1860. They still remain and you can see one of them at Mrs. Gardener's and one at Sir. Wm. Van Horne's."

Perhaps after all, Hunt was not so well fitted to criticize methods of landscape painting as he was to discuss the technique of portrait painting, since the largest demands upon his brush first lay in that direction, and he was constantly engaged in executing works which gave proof of the great gifts he had brought to this important branch of art. In the most characteristic portraits painted by Hunt at this time, criticism has little to say save by way of admiration and regard.



CHAPTER III  
ESTABLISHED IN BOSTON





### CHAPTER III

**I**T WAS during the turmoil and excitement of the outbreak of the Civil War that Hunt removed from Newport to Boston, and occupied at first rooms in the Studio Building. He threw himself heartily into the struggle, executing works like "The Bugle Call," and "The Drummer Boy," an epic poem, a work full of strength and enthusiasm, expressed in the eager, handsome figure of a boy posed high against a sky background, beating a drum, with the motto, "To Arms! To Arms!" It attracted great crowds while on exhibition in the window of Williams and Everett's store, on the corner of Washington and Bedford streets, and stirred the citizens of Boston, already burning with patriotic ardor, to the highest pitch of effort to sustain the Government.

His brother, Leavitt Hunt, was on the staff of Gen. Heintzelman. Hunt wrote his mother, April 20, 1862:— "We have just received yours and

BOSTON DAYS OF WILLIAM MORRIS HUNT

Jennie's letter, dated April 2nd, enclosing one also to Leavitt, which I shall forward to as near his whereabouts as possible—and hope he will receive it. Indeed I wonder how the letters can go to their destination as well as they do, when we think what constant changes take place in the disposition of the different bodies of the army. We get no news as yet from Yorktown and the neighborhood. I for one am in no hurry for the advance, for I feel morally certain that those in command are more anxious than any outsider can possibly be for success, and they would necessarily take advantage of the earliest opportunity. How much is lost by hurry and how much inconvenience occasioned by confusion in small things, ought to teach us that the same rule may possibly apply to things of somewhat greater magnitude. I do believe in choosing what is considered the proper person to conduct matters, and then form into ranks of obedience and wait for orders, if it is still doomsday—I believe a fool let alone can accomplish more than a wise man driven by fools. We have so many efficient people that they can't leave well alone, they can't help, as some



MRS. CHARLES FRANCIS ADAMS

*Owned by Mrs. Henry P. Quincy*



one has expressed it, jogging the elbow of the Lord. However, I don't doubt, it is all going on very well with the drawbacks which are necessarily attendant on such immense movements. I suppose there exist more than a million of brothers and sisters whose anxiety and hope equal ours with regard to Leavitt and his safety. Let us hope he will get through with as little harm as possible."

Hunt painted a fine portrait of Governor Andrew, Massachusetts's great War governor, which is now in Faneuil Hall. His patriotic and untiring services well deserved this tribute from Professor Norton in 1866: "To you, more than to any other man, is due the fact that through these years of trial Massachusetts has kept her old place of leadership. Through you she has given proof of her constancy to those principles to which she was from the beginning devoted. You have helped her to be true to her ideal. You have represented all that is best in her spirit and her aims. There are no better years in her history than those with which your name will be forever associated in honor."

The portrait of Judge Shaw, painted soon after



Hunt's establishment in Boston, assured his reputation, and marks the era of his success. It was his first portrait of any note in America, and was received with unstinted praise. It was painted for the Essex County Bar, "in appreciation of the great public services of his Honor, and the unsullied purity of his private and judicial life." The subject was one that would have appealed to Velasquez; and Hunt brought to the work a full understanding of the possibilities for a great portrait, and knew that what he did must stand for the highest expression of law and justice.

"Shaw <sup>1</sup> looked the judge. Although not tall in stature, his frame was large and powerful. He was slow of speech and his voice was deep and low. Experience has shown that formality in the courtroom is most conducive to satisfactory results. We need to be reminded constantly of the majesty of the law, and the irresistible weight of its decrees. No one could be unmindful of these things when he looked at Shaw upon the bench. It was said by

<sup>1</sup> "Lemuel Shaw, Chief Justice," by Frederic Hathaway Chase. By permission of Houghton, Mifflin Company, Publishers.



one of his contemporaries that had Michelangelo seen his head, he would have made a Moses of it. Chief Justice of Massachusetts from 1830 till 1860, his long career was distinguished by an almost unerring instinct for the kernel of a question, and by the greatest firmness for what he believed the right decision. Nothing could move him from the path of duty. He stood in his place and the billows broke at his feet."

Hunt has represented the great jurist in the act of rendering a verdict. The portrait has a monumental quality, and would look equally well in bronze or marble. Apart from the great power of the painting, the figure, as classic in its dress suit as if it were in a toga, is so well placed on the canvas that while there is not one unnecessary accessory, there is no feeling of any lack of details. The Judge's massive head, the rugged vigor of his features, the large characteristic hands, are all painted with a strength and simplicity that places the portrait among the masterpieces of any time or country. Judge Shaw recognized the ability of Hunt, and lent himself unreservedly to the work of

posing, feeling it to be his duty to help the artist in every way, and the result showed the perfect accord that existed between the two men. The sum of \$500 was paid for the portrait by members of the Essex Bar, and it hangs in the Court House at Salem, Mass., a noble memorial of a great artist and a great Chief Justice.

Judge Shaw lived for the last thirty years of his life in the fine old house, 49 Mount Vernon Street. Few houses, even in that favored quarter of Boston, could show an interior more enriched with the stately furnishings of an earlier time. In the dining-room hung two notable portraits, one by Copley of Mrs. Shaw's grandmother, Mrs. Samuel Phillips Savage, and a portrait of Mrs. Shaw's mother, Hope Savage, by Gilbert Stuart.

In 1864, Hunt fitted up a large studio in the old Mercantile Building in Summer Street. Early in the spring he gave his first reception in Boston, which was as brilliant as it was original. The walls of the spacious room were covered with paintings by him, and by Jean François Millet and other French artists. Other receptions followed, in which



MASTER FRANCIS GARDNER  
*Boston Latin School*



were introduced tableaux and impromptu acting, in which the artist took part to the delight of all present. The portrait of Martin Brimmer, the leading figure in the philanthropy, art, and social life of Boston, was painted in this studio. Mr. Brimmer helped in drawing up the plan for the Museum of Fine Arts, and presided at the first meeting. He was elected its president in the spring of 1870, and held this office for more than twenty-five years. He urged the duty of the Museum to represent the local artists, Copley, Stuart, Allston, Hunt and others. By his devotion, intelligence and generosity, he placed the Museum on a sound footing, and furthered every movement for the best things in the life of Boston. "There <sup>1</sup> was in Mr. Brimmer nothing of that austere look which comes from holding on to property and standing pat," one who knew him well has said; "and besides this he was warm; not perhaps quite as warm as the tropics, but very much warmer than the average Beacon Street mantelpieces were. He would discourse and laugh

<sup>1</sup> "Memories and Milestones," by John Jay Chapman. By permission of Moffat, Yard and Company, Publishers.



heartily about these mantelpieces—instead of turning haughty and assuming a look of profaned intimacy, if any one noticed the lack of fire in them.” Mr. Brimmer was a great admirer of Millet, and it was for him that Hunt bought a number of works by this artist which are now in the Museum of Fine Arts.

In the earlier stages of Hunt’s career as a painter, there was a distinct fascination about his portraits and other figure subjects. He endeavored to produce a portrait that should be a work of art instead of a rigidly correct likeness. He usually received at once a strong impression of the person sitting to him, and could he have continued a portrait in the same spirit in which it was begun, the result could have hardly failed to become an artistic one. The question of likeness often gave him great difficulty, because he was not willing to obtain it at the expense of any of the great qualities of painting. These qualities were to Hunt of the first importance, and he disliked to lose them. With untiring patience, some portraits he would elaborate to the last detail. A subject that especially appealed to him,



he would not infrequently complete in a single sitting.

One of these quickly painted masterpieces was the portrait of Mrs. Richard M. Hunt and child, three-quarters length, and life-size. Hunt had received from his brother Richard an order to paint this picture, and charmed with his subject, he painted a masterly study for himself. The mother seems to be walking with her child upon her shoulder. Her graceful back is shown, and both figures are full of vitality.

Among his other portraits which were completed in a short space of time, is the remarkable one of the venerable Mr. Allen Wardner, of Windsor, Vt., the father of Mrs. W. M. Evarts. Of this portrait Hunt once said:

"I always dislike to work away from my studio, but as several members of the Evarts family were to be painted, there was no help for it. I used to go to Mr. Wardner's room and study him while we talked. One day the family had gone away on some excursion, so I took my paints into his room and by night the portrait was done. As it was

growing dark, I took it out upon the lawn to see what it was like, and some of the neighbors came over to look at it. They thought it would do pretty well when it was finished. 'You are going to finish it more?' was the inquiry. 'Oh, yes, I have a good north light in my Boston studio, and I shall take it down there and finish it,'—which I did by giving it a coat of varnish."

This head of a fast disappearing type of New Englander is full of character. The large nose, the set mouth, and the meditative eyes are skillfully indicated, and the long hair and beard of an outgrown fashion are suggested with a keen insight as to their effect on the character of the portrait. The quiet tone which pervades this portrait, and the mellow light which illumines the face, stamp it as one of the best efforts of the painter.

The sketch of Hon. William M. Evarts which Hunt made at this time, portrays with vigor the character and ability of the man who served his country faithfully for fifty years, during which occurred some of the most critical situations in its history.



JULIA AND MADELINE, WIFE AND DAUGHTER OF MR. WOOLSEY BORLAND  
*Owned by Mrs. Gordon Abbott*



The Great War and the many perplexing problems arising out of it have engrossed our attention to such an extent that the events of the Sixties and Seventies, important as they were, seem to belong to a very far-away era, and the speeches and arguments of Mr. Evarts have a curiously old-time flavor, although he died in the present century. Probably his greatest achievement was the defense of Andrew Johnson in the impeachment trial of 1868. His speech lasted altogether for fourteen days, and came very near tiring the Senate out. Evarts was one of the professional wits of New York, and his argument was enlivened throughout by his sallies. On the fourth day he began his speech by saying: "Mr. Chief Justice, and Senators, I cannot but feel that you had at the end of the argument yesterday, reached somewhat the condition of feeling of a very celebrated Judge, Lord Ellenborough, who, when a certain lawyer had conducted an argument to the ordinary hour of adjournment, and suggested that he would proceed whenever it should be his lordship's pleasure to hear him, responded, 'The Court will hear you tomorrow,



Sir, but as to pleasure, that has long been out of the question.' ”

“Evarts was too intelligent a man to be blind to Johnson’s shortcomings, but his whole attitude in the case is delightfully brought out in his reply to Sumner who accused him of working over his case on Sunday. “Is it not written,” he said, “that if thine ass falleth into a pit, it is lawful to pull him out on the Sabbath Day?”

Mr. Evarts was again employed as counsel for the Republican Party in 1877 when he sustained its claim before the Electoral Commission in the Hayes-Tilden election. On the accession of Mr. Hayes to the Presidency, Mr. Evarts was appointed Secretary of State.

In 1871 a deputation of boys from the Boston Latin School came to Hunt’s studio in the Mercantile Building and asked him if he would paint a portrait of their schoolmaster, Mr. Francis Gardner. They had only been able to raise \$300, but Hunt was so pleased with the idea of their wanting a portrait of their master, that he agreed to do what



he could for them at that price. "At first thought I felt he ought to be painted with a Latin grammar in one hand, and a ferule in the other," Hunt said, "but when I came to see the man, I knew that he should be painted for himself alone."

For three generations this stern and rugged man ruled the Latin School with an iron hand. A terror to evil doers, he was at the same time just in all his judgments, and the friend of the boy who tried to do his best. The portrait was completed in three days, and Hunt succeeded in rendering his marked and striking characteristics so faithfully that he confessed to being startled by the portrait as he entered his studio the morning after its completion, and thought for a moment that Master Gardner had called on him and was awaiting his arrival. One of his pupils, years after went to see the portrait. He was now a man of middle-age and the father of a family. He stood looking at it for a few minutes and then exclaimed, "That picture makes me tremble. I feel as if Mr. Gardner had just found me out."

There is no attempt at any pose in the portrait, the famous teacher sits heavily planted in his chair, apparently resting for a moment, the tousled hair and careless cravat accenting actuality. It hangs in the hall of the new Latin School Building in the Fenway.

Master Gardner used to take daily exercise in the Stewart Gymnasium in old Boylston Hall. "I can see him now," writes James DeWolf Lovett,<sup>1</sup> "active as a cat; in undershirt and duck trousers, performing feats upon the horizontal bar, parallel bars, and vaulting horse, easily outdoing much younger men, perhaps with not much grace, but with a splendid rugged vigor which was a pleasure to witness and won the wholesome respect and admiration of his boys.

"Mr. Gardner's force of character was well known, but that he possessed a most kind heart, and gentle ways when occasion called for them, is not so generally recognized.

"At recess one day, he called up and was ques-

<sup>1</sup> "Old Boston Boys and the Games They Played," James DeWolf Lovett. Privately printed at the Riverside Press, 1906.



MRS. RICHARD MORRIS HUNT AND CHILD  
*Museum of Fine Arts, Boston*



tioning a delicate-looking fellow, named Loring, about a lesson in which he had failed badly. Under Mr. Gardner's stern eye he broke down completely, and throwing his arms about the strong man's neck, hid his face upon his shoulder and sobbed passionately.

The really sweet and tender way in which Mr. Gardner comforted that little fellow, the gentleness with which he stroked the little head with his big hand, and finally brought back the smiles to his face, was a revelation to those of us who were present."

The portrait of Mrs. Charles Francis Adams is as fine a thing as Hunt ever did in this line, and manifests to a remarkable degree the artist's astonishing versatility. The arrangement is admirable and dignified, while the painting is carried further, as regards the face, than in many of his portraits, proving his ability to add finish to a subject when he was thoroughly interested and felt it was needed. The lace, though subordinate, is carefully studied in the right places. The hands are full of individual character, and the whole is painted with a freedom



which does not prevent much attention to details. The expression of the face is distinguished and agreeable, while no attempt has been made to flatter. Mrs. Adams was the daughter of Peter C. Brooks of Boston, and the mother of Henry Adams, whose "Education" has attracted so many readers. She was with her husband, Hon. Charles Francis Adams, at the Court of St. James during the critical period of the Civil War.

A noticeable feature in all Hunt's portraits, in spite of great diversity of treatment, is their life-like quality to an extraordinary degree, with no restraint of the model in them, they are full of vigor and full of a certain kind of penetration. Flesh painting proper as the old masters understood it, or as understood by Henner, Watts and Sargent, is scarcely attempted but there is a sobriety and even dignity of treatment which is a rare quality in portraiture, and the flesh suffers but little from the cold gray shadows so common in modern French art.

"What is the distinction of a great portrait, such as Titian's 'Man with the Glove,' Whistler's 'Por-



trait of my Mother,' and the portrait of Bertin by Ingres, in the Louvre? Unquestionably there is the tradition of design which accepts no stereotyped pattern, yet demands that pattern of a sort should go to the development of a portrait, and it is this tradition which links all the great schools of portraiture together. In the modern portrait the artist is apt to be careful about the placing of the figure on his canvas. The personality of the sitter is strongly, even rudely, seized. The illusion of an actual presence is constantly realized, and often in portraits of women, what is denominated as decorative arrangement, a pleasing, more or less pictorial, effect in which vivid color is seldom absent. In the great portrait, the disposition of form and color is so distinguished that one very nearly forgets the sitter, enjoying the portrait simply as a work of art, the quality of something rich, full and final, which belongs alike to an early Florentine profile, and to such intensely modern things as some of the portraits by Degas, as for example, his 'Lady in Black' in Mrs. Gardner's Collection in Fenway Court."

One of Hunt's best bits of painting is the study

of his wife, called the "Lost Profile." It is clear and true in its color and relations of light and shadow. The back of the head is shown slightly bent forward over a piece of needlework; the white column of the neck is in full light, but the side of the face is shown in shadow.

The interest which Hunt took in a portrait was the interest which he felt in living human nature. The sensitiveness which he brought to his work was so great that the slightest friction disturbed him, and sometimes he was not successful because he required that the sitter should lend himself to the work. Thus a portrait of Dr. Holmes was successfully begun, but the Doctor unhappily took out his watch, having an engagement in Cambridge, and asked, "How long must I sit?" Hunt, somewhat disturbed, yet kept at his work, and all was going well, when the watch and the uneasy expression reappeared, and it became a mental and physical impossibility to continue the portrait. Emerson disliked even to sit for a photograph, said he was not a subject for art. Mrs. John M. Forbes wished that Hunt should paint his portrait, and the sittings



WOMAN WITH CATTLE  
*Owned by Mr. Frank W. Bayley*



were arranged. Hunt greatly admired Emerson and began the work with enthusiasm, and made a sketch that would have resulted in a fine portrait had it been possible for him to go on with the work. But though Emerson liked him, the sittings dismayed him, and when on leaving he asked, "Must I come again?" Hunt told him, no, it was no use. Emerson's unfinished portrait perished in the Boston Fire.

A lady asked Hunt, "Would you paint Mr. A. if I could persuade him to sit for his portrait?" and he replied: "I don't like persuaded sitters. I never could paint a cat if the cat had any scruples, religious, superstitious, or otherwise, about sitting."

Hunt's sensitive and highly-strung temperament afforded capacity for enjoyment unknown to people differently constituted, but this was counterbalanced by keen susceptibility to annoyance and impatience with the ordinary incompetent criticism which misunderstood and misrepresented him. His enmity was notably excited by the kind of simplicity that marched up to a picture painted to be seen at a distance of several feet, and "putting its nose



against the canvas prated of brush marks and roughness and lack of finish." Hunt was engaged to paint the portrait of Charles Sumner to be presented to Hon. Carl Schurz. A member of the committee came one day to see the picture. Feeling some doubt of the absolute correctness of the likeness, he took up a pair of calipers, and began to measure the photograph from which the portrait had to be painted, at the same time comparing the measurements with the painting. Hunt amazed at the impertinence of the act, exclaimed hotly, "Is your knowledge of art limited to what a pair of calipers can measure? Is Sumner's character confined to his nose? You need not do any measuring in my studio." It has been considered one of Hunt's best portraits, a vigorous portrayal of Sumner's strong and aggressive qualities; but the committee were not altogether satisfied with it, and Hunt never presented his bill. It is now in the Metropolitan Museum of New York. Sumner was a man of imposing presence, large and tall, over six feet in height. He had iron gray hair and side whiskers, and a rather long nose which he was fond





PORTRAIT HEAD

*John Herron Art Institute, Indianapolis*



of pulling. He almost always wore a frock coat and white waistcoat, with checked trousers and white spats, quite in the English statesman style. When he was in Boston he lived at 20 Hancock Street.

Shortly after the death of President Lincoln, Hunt was commissioned to paint a portrait of him to be engraved. The order was given by Mr. Doll, of Doll & Richards. Governor Andrew wrote to Mrs. Lincoln with a request for material. Pendell, a man of the same height as President Lincoln (a door-keeper at the White House), was sent to Boston to bring his master's clothes, and to wear them during the painting of the portrait. His description of the President confirmed Hunt's idea of him, and he posed for the action of the portrait, and as a lay figure for the clothes. After the portrait had been painted, the commission for reasons satisfactory to both parties, was annulled. Governor Andrew proposed that the State should purchase the portrait, but opposition on the part of some of the members of the Legislature made Hunt insist that the matter should be dropped. But for the action of

BOSTON DAYS OF WILLIAM MORRIS HUNT

the Legislature, this portrait which competent judges described as the only portrait that had a shadow of merit as a representation of Lincoln, would now adorn the walls of the State House in Boston. It was destroyed in the Summer Street studio, in the fire of 1872.

CHAPTER IV  
THE HUNT ART CLASS





#### CHAPTER IV

**A**DMIRABLE as was the art Hunt displayed in his portraits and all the various other lines in which he exercised his skill so successfully, we owe our greatest debt to him for hastening here the recognition and appreciation of what was best and most deserving in the art of others. He tried to make people realize that they were actually living in an era of great art. He was the first American to own bronzes by Barye, the great animal sculptor, and highly praise his genius. During his residence in Paris, Hunt saw much of Barye, who gave him a friendship and assistance of which he always spoke with continued pleasure. Barye taught him how much there was in the construction and composition of a single figure; of the unity and comprehension of a subject, and of the steadiness necessary to work it out. He believed Barye and Millet to be not only the greatest men of their time, but artists who were contributing, to their day and to coming

generations, individual and lasting works of art.

For this reason he urged his wealthy and influential friends to buy their works and those of the other men of the Barbizon School, who insisted that the depth and perspective of the sky, the natural colors, the exact truth, had a right to exist in art, and revealed a new world. An artist once said to Hunt of some pictures of Millet and Corot which were in his studio, "These paintings are not complete. They are not finely drawn, like the work of Claude, Ruysdael and others of the older painters." Hunt replied, "No, but these artists do not attempt to equal the older ones in these respects. Such things have already been carried to the highest excellence. But they try rather to give nature in its intimate, out-door aspect, a thing that has never been attempted before. To equal what has been done before is not enough to put a man on a level with the greatest. The best must be surpassed in some aspects.

To every American artist returning from study and observation abroad, Hunt extended a cordial welcome home, and each found in him his first pa-



Mrs. GEORGE W. LONG

*Owned by Mr. Harry V. Long*



tron. J. Foxcroft Cole was the first well-known artist, after Hunt, who studied in Paris. On his return, Hunt bought four of his paintings, and helped him to a career that was eminently successful. He saw great possibilities in the work of Vedder, and urged him to exhibit in Boston, which he did successfully, and some of his best works are now treasured here. Hunt and Vedder made a pilgrimage to Concord together to see Emerson, and as Vedder said, "have it out with him" for his remark to the effect that "Nature being the same on the banks of the Kennebec as on the banks of the Tiber—why go to Europe?" "We,<sup>1</sup> having both been to Europe, could not reconcile ourselves to this dictum—in fact, were quite riled about it. Now, when you saw Emerson, you saw Alcott; but when you saw Alcott you did not necessarily see Emerson. Be that as it may, Emerson fell to my lot. I will not describe him—he was all that is most sweet and gracious; so was I. I said, 'Mr. Emerson, I think there is a great difference between

<sup>1</sup> "The Digressions of V," by Elihu Vedder. By permission of Houghton, Mifflin Company, Publishers.

the literary man and the artist in regard to Europe. Nature is the same everywhere, but literature and art are Nature seen through other eyes, and a literary man in Patagonia without books to consult, would be at a great disadvantage. Here he has all that is essential in the way of books; but to the artist, whose books are pictures, this land is Patagonia.' (And so it was at that time.) I continued; 'Take from your shelves your Bible, Plato, Shakespeare, Dante, Bacon, Montaigne, etc., and make it so you could not consult them without going to Europe, and I think it would soon be—Ho, for Europe. Could impudence go further? I was very young. 'Yes, yes,' said he, 'that is an aspect of the question which should be taken into consideration.' Hunt and I were jubilant; our little torpedo had exploded and we imagined that hereafter all would be plain sailing."

It was largely through Hunt's influence that Boston artists began to go more and more to France to study. An art society, called the Allston Club, of which Hunt was president, included men like Ames, Bicknell, Cole, Walter Gay, LaFarge, Robinson,



Vedder and others, who had had the benefit of foreign travel and study. Though the career of the Club was brief, it had to its credit the single but glorious achievement of the purchase of "The Quarry" by Courbet. The picture was brought to Boston in the spring of 1866 by an enterprising Belgian art dealer, and exhibited in a store on Bromfield Street. The price was \$5000. The sum was raised by energetic members of the Club, and during May and June of that year a large banner hung from a window in the Studio Building, announcing the exhibition of Courbet's great painting. It was originally entitled "La Curée du Chevreuil." It was first exhibited in the Paris Salon of 1857, and with another hunting scene in the same exhibition, began the series of hunting pictures, continually extended by Courbet, who was himself a great hunter, and even, as he admits in one of his letters, an incorrigible poacher. It is regarded as Courbet's masterpiece. On the disbanding of the Allston Club it came into the possession of Mr. Henry Sayles, who had been one of the most liberal subscribers to the original fund for its purchase, and

for many years was the chief feature of his very extensive private collection of paintings in the Back Bay. It was purchased from the heirs of Mr. Sayles by the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston.

It was considered at the time when acquired by the Allston Club, as an extreme example of the revolutionary in art, and the advocates of conservatism saw little or nothing to admire in the picture. It is a large canvas and of first-rate importance as an acquisition to the Museum's permanent collection. "In a wood of tall pines the deer is shown hung up by its foot from a tree. In the delicate handling of the pelt, and the magnificent poise and weight of the body, the painter has created an admirable piece of still life. Standing up, in a blouse, shoulders back, gaitered, with arms folded, Courbet is listening to the huntsman sounding his horn. Two dogs, dappled with brown spots, are bounding towards the stag." Courbet was the leader of the realist movement in France, and his works aroused fierce criticism. When he received the money for "The Quarry" he is said to have exclaimed, "What care I for the Salon, what care I for honors, when



THE LITTLE GLEANER  
*Toledo Museum of Art*



the art students of a new and great country know and appreciate and buy my works!"

Hunt himself came in for a large share of criticism. He was accused of holding autocratic sway and cramming Boston with French art, of which he and Couture were the prophets. Hunt's reply was that to hold that art was confined to a school or a people was as silly as to maintain that an art criticism could only be written with a quill from the great bald-headed American eagle; that it was not worth while to be alarmed about the influence of French art. It would not be mortifying if a Millet or a Delacroix should be developed in Boston. It is not our fault that we inherit ignorance of art, but we are not obliged to advertise it. Like all pioneers, Hunt was misunderstood and derided, but he lived to come into his own, and be recognized as a new force in American art, and while his work undoubtedly displayed an unfamiliar quality to his contemporaries, his irrepressible energy and cultivated taste, so independent and sure, gave him an influence and power which is perhaps more felt to-day than ever. There is in Boston a sentimental



reverence for Jean François Millet and a feeling of personal enthusiasm about his paintings which is one of Hunt's most valuable legacies. Millet is understood, appreciated and loved more cordially here, and more generally represented than in any other part of this country.

Artists of today are apt to pride themselves on their appreciation of the art of Japan, and claim credit for discovering its excellence, and adopting its methods. As a matter of fact, Hunt, Vedder and LaFarge were enthusiastic about Japanese works of art, and often met in the room of Mr. Edward C. Cabot, the architect, in the Studio Building, to discuss their merits. The first Japanese picture-books appeared in Boston about sixty years ago. They were brought home by some sailors and sold at Leonard's auction room. Dr. William S. Bigelow says of these books: "I well remember the interest that they excited. My father bought one or two books which we know now were volumes of Hokusai, and also a small but elaborate lacquered drum with heavy red silk tension-cords as thick as a lead pencil laced back and forth between the pro-



jecting edges of the drumheads which gave forth a change of pitch when drawn together with the hand. There were also various odds and ends which puzzled people in those days, for instance, a Japanese pipe which had a little hemispherical bowl a quarter of an inch in diameter, incomprehensible to our western eyes of course, as we did not then know that the Japanese idea of smoking was that a pipe should only afford two or three whiffs and then be refilled. There was also a double handful of small repoussé metal ornaments intended for the decoration of leather tobacco-pouches and what I remember very vividly, a Japanese two-handed sword of full length, which was, I think, the first that had ever been seen in this part of the world. Many artists in those days, however, including Whistler, urged their pupils to study the Japanese. On other minds the reaction was different. Mr. Greenough, the sculptor, for example, said that 'Japanese things were not *le beau idéal* but *le laid idéal*.' He was, however, in the minority."

In the early days of the Hunt class choice speci-

reverence for Jean François Millet and a feeling of personal enthusiasm about his paintings which is one of Hunt's most valuable legacies. Millet is understood, appreciated and loved more cordially here, and more generally represented than in any other part of this country.

Artists of today are apt to pride themselves on their appreciation of the art of Japan, and claim credit for discovering its excellence, and adopting its methods. As a matter of fact, Hunt, Vedder and LaFarge were enthusiastic about Japanese works of art, and often met in the room of Mr. Edward C. Cabot, the architect, in the Studio Building, to discuss their merits. The first Japanese picture-books appeared in Boston about sixty years ago. They were brought home by some sailors and sold at Leonard's auction room. Dr. William S. Bigelow says of these books: "I well remember the interest that they excited. My father bought one or two books which we know now were volumes of Hokusai, and also a small but elaborate lacquered drum with heavy red silk tension-cords as thick as a lead pencil laced back and forth between the pro-

jecting edges of the drumheads which gave forth a change of pitch when drawn together with the hand. There were also various odds and ends which puzzled people in those days, for instance, a Japanese pipe which had a little hemispherical bowl a quarter of an inch in diameter, incomprehensible to our western eyes of course, as we did not then know that the Japanese idea of smoking was that a pipe should only afford two or three whiffs and then be refilled. There was also a double handful of small repoussé metal ornaments intended for the decoration of leather tobacco-pouches and what I remember very vividly, a Japanese two-handed sword of full length, which was, I think, the first that had ever been seen in this part of the world. Many artists in those days, however, including Whistler, urged their pupils to study the Japanese. On other minds the reaction was different. Mr. Greenough, the sculptor, for example, said that 'Japanese things were not *le beau idéal* but *le laid idéal*.' He was, however, in the minority."

In the early days of the Hunt class choice speci-

mens of Japanese art were to be found on the walls of the studio, and Hunt continually said to those who needed most the advice, "Study the Japanese. Look at their work. They knew the thing, and put it down. No high light in their decoration; flat tints with due regard to values."

The little charcoal sketch of the "Bird on the Cherry Bough," has all these elements. It was done with a bit of charcoal taken from the hearth to amuse one of his children. No picture-book was a greater favorite in the nursery than a copy of Hokusai's prints, which Hunt owned.

Hunt's opinions in art matters were so well considered, so thoroughly sound that it was not easy to show him weak points in them; yet he never wanted anybody to believe a thing because he said it, but was prepared with an abundance of argument and illustration to prove it true. There were, necessarily, many things in art that Hunt was not sure about, and these he always spoke of as points that he could not pretend to decide.

It was one of Hunt's maxims that artists are the best teachers, and the only ones who are really fit



MR. ALLEN WARDNER

*Owned by the Family of the late Maxwell Evarts*







to instruct in art. "An artist is one who does, not one who talks or teaches. A lecture on art, like hash, to be popular need not be nourishing, but it must be easily swallowed. It is well enough to listen to lectures to save yourself the trouble of knowing anything, but if you want to learn anything, you had better use your eyes."

Invited by a professor at Yale College to lecture before the students, he sent this characteristic reply: "Dear Sir, My time is already more than taken up in trying to learn how to paint, and as I get no information on the subject from lectures, I do not think I can assist others by lecturing. The world is full of people who lecture on art, and I will not interfere with them. Very truly yours, W. M. Hunt."

Hunt's definition of painting was having something to say and not saying it in words. "Are we interested seriously in art, or do we make believe, do it for fun or show, or to give a learned recognition of art? We think, I believe, that all we have to do is to talk about it, found a school, build a museum, while art is really *Doing*." Such was his

intense love for his work and his profession, that he was drawn at once to those who were trying to paint and with the instinct of a supremely generous nature, gave of his best to all who asked him. Hunt ardently wished to lay the foundations of a school which should be at once broad and technical, in which the student should be taught to see that the elements of a picture lay in every least arrangement of an object, either with relation to other subjects, or to light or shade or color. In his own education he had felt how deficient were even the best methods of instruction, how much form and how little spirit lay in the dull round of accepted art teaching; and by this means he believed, and with reason, that all the powers of the student could be harmoniously developed; that hand and eye, memory and emotion, should proceed together towards the results which follow a broad and comprehensive training. When Hunt first returned to America, it was proposed by his brother, Richard Hunt, the architect, that together they should start in New York a school of architecture and painting. A great atelier on the French plan, in which students

should come together to work under several leading artists who would be willing to give a day each week to teaching, and pupils would find what they wanted in the inspiration and instruction of one or another of these artists. The proposed art school never took shape owing to the many commissions which occupied the entire time of the architect, whose works, extending over a period of forty fruitful years, constitute a sum of achievement honorable to himself and creditable and useful to his country. "Richard Hunt was, however, the first and perhaps remains the only one of American practising architects to convert his office into an atelier, in which the draughtsmen were also students, and in which systematic instruction was given them. This education is not so much needed now, in view of the opportunity for study abroad, but at the time it was a real want that the young graduate of the Beaux Arts undertook to meet."

With the artist, the plan was always present; he had learned what to follow, what to avoid, and only wished for an opportunity to make use of his experience in his own land. He was constantly re-

ceiving letters asking where an art student could go for instruction. He said more than once, that he had half a mind to take an entire side of one of the Boston dailies and publish all these letters, that people might understand what a call there was for really good art instruction, a call not met at that time by any American academy or school. The Metropolitan Museum in New York, and the Boston Museum of Fine Arts, were not incorporated until 1870. The center and one wing of the Museum in Boston were opened to the public July 3d, 1876, and the School of Drawing and Painting was started the same year and placed in charge of Otto Grundmann of Antwerp.

Up to that time there was but one notable collection of paintings in the city of New York. It was a private collection and could be seen only one day a week, during the winter months, by those fortunate enough to secure special cards of admission. Until the Civil War period, there were only one or two private collections of pictures in Boston. Mr. Thomas G. Appleton, who knew Troyon, in Paris, bought a few of his paintings and one pastel





ITALIAN BOY

*Charcoal Drawing. Owned by Mrs. Horatio N. Slater*





drawing, and having acquired a Rousseau, a Diaz, and about thirty other works, may be said to have had the finest picture gallery in town previous to 1860. Boston art lovers have never made such extensive, costly and showy collections as those owned in New York, or like that of Mr. Walters in Baltimore, but the number of masterpieces modestly housed in the homes of wealth of this city is surprising, and it is a significant fact in the history of this country's art development, that there was a time when New York dealers who had a fine Corot or Courbet, were obliged to send it to Boston in order to sell it. That Boston was prompt to recognize the best modern art was due to the teaching of Hunt more than to any other cause. His own art was imbued with the modern spirit. He raised the art standard, he dignified the profession, and caused art to be respected as it had not been since Washington Allston's day.

It was the outcome of Hunt's great desire to render substantial service to the cause here, that led him to open his studio for teaching soon after he had become well established in Boston, and more

than that, for the teaching of women art students. It is hard to realize in this age, when so many doors are thrown wide open to women seeking instruction in the same branches as men, how limited were the opportunities, even fifty years ago, for women to obtain any instruction of value in art. A young man might go abroad and fill his imagination with the treasures of European galleries, and learn from the study of the old masters in their works, and in the studios of the modern painters, the principles and practise of their art, but this was denied to women. It was once thought improper for women even to attend lectures without an escort, and as late as 1838 it is a matter of history that a Lowell Institute audience was likely to make it disagreeable for ladies, unaccompanied by men, to gain admission. Miss Sarah Freeman Clarke, who was one of the first to have the benefit of instruction from Washington Allston, and the first Boston woman to excel in landscape painting, makes the statement that "in 1827, the first exhibition of pictures was announced at the Athenaeum, and a joyous whisper went about that ladies might go to this exhibition

unattended by a gentleman. Advanced womanhood will smile at this concession, granted by I know not what social power."

Hunt was severely criticized for spending his time "teaching a lot of women," but he was never half-hearted; whatever he did was done with intense earnestness. In his generous enthusiasm he gave up to this class of forty women his large and favorite studio in the Mercantile Building, on Summer Street, taking for himself one that was smaller and not as well lighted. The class proved an inspiration and a success. Charcoal was the medium used and all were delighted with its easy and quick results. In no other city in the country was such advanced art instruction to be obtained. Hunt had absorbed the modern ideas and methods of the best foreign studios, and was eager to lay them before his pupils, asking only that they should believe that he knew what was best for them. While a New York critic was saying that "Hunt gave to school-girls what was meant for mankind," English critics, like Sir Coutts Lindsey, were regretting that their artists had not handed down to pupils the

knowledge which they had acquired. "Suppose," he said, "that such men as Millais, Watts, Burne-Jones, Sir Frederic Leighton, Poynter, and others were to gather around them a number of sympathetic students, is it not evident that the riches of knowledge which they accumulated would fructify in the minds of others, and not expire with their own lives? The great artists have always done this. The old Italian artists lived and died in the midst of their schools, accumulating and keeping alive art-knowledge in a thousand channels, creating new applicants to join the swelling river of Italian art till it has flooded the whole of Europe with its glory."

Hunt maintained that every artist ought to teach; that was the greatest need of art in this country. He spread a veritable contagion of single-minded devotion to art for art's own sake, and carried on a vigorous crusade against the tendency to conventionality that is so rooted in the subsoil of American art. He introduced the antidote for the mechanical mind of the average art student, by a course of free thinking, so to speak. He taught





MISS IDA M. MASON  
*Owened by Miss Mason*





that truth only is of value in art, absolute fidelity to whatever phase of nature inspired the desire to seize it and preserve it, a glow of color, a combination of lines, an arrangement of light and shade, or a vital point of character. That was the thing to try and put down.

Moreover, whatever is painted well must be painted from the impulse of love for nature. George Sand's human trinity, sensation, sentiment and knowledge, was the trinity of Hunt's religion of art, and he taught the doctrines of this religion with the zeal of a born propagandist. His own work illustrated the force of his precepts. After years of experiment and diligent practise, he had gained a facility in putting in rapidly the effect of any object with economy of labor and material. By the use of charcoal, a material of which Hunt was master, his students learned picturesque arrangements of light and shade, and to jot down broadly and freely impressions of nature. He imparted to all who came under his influence belief in the right principles of art and much of his own grand faith.

One of the secrets of Hunt's success was that he clothed his ideas in an original and racy style. The class went on for three years, but his own work made such demands on his time that he appointed Miss Helen M. Knowlton, one of his pupils, as teacher, while he would come in every day or two and correct the work. During these short and inspiring visits, Miss Knowlton, for her own use in teaching, would step behind a screen and write down hastily all the brilliant, witty remarks with which he went from one easel to another, criticizing or praising, as the case might be. Miss Knowlton had no intention of making the notes public, until Hunt's visit to Mexico, when the class so missed the magnetism of his presence, that she used her manuscript notes of his instruction.

In this way the compilation of the well-known series of Hunt's "Talks on Art" was begun. To all intents and purposes they stand in the same relation to American painting, as did Sir Joshua Reynolds' criticisms to English art, and it would be a most interesting thing to compare the refined and somewhat courtly discourse of the President of the

Royal Academy, with the terse and vigorous sentences, enlivened with a dash of New England slang, in which Hunt expressed his ideas on art so forcibly. The following are taken at random from "Talks on Art":

Nature is economical. She puts her lights and darks only where she needs them. Don't try to be more skilful than she is.

All notes in music are not high. There must be low tones as well. Put in only such details as will help the masses. Don't have your work all *trills*.

The artist is an interpreter of Nature. People learn to love Nature through pictures. To the artist nothing is in vain; nothing beneath his notice. If he is great enough he will exalt every subject which he treats. Who sees or hears the word "Albatross," and does not think of "The Ancient Mariner"?

Painting is looked at as an accomplishment. But it is the only universal language. All Nature is creation's picture-book. Painting only can describe everything which can be seen, and suggest

every emotion which can be felt. Art reaches back into the babyhood of time, and is man's only lasting monument.

Beauty is that little something which fills the whole world, and is neither contained in a straight nose, a long eyelash or a blue mountain. Some see it in a leg of mutton; others in a compound fracture. And to expect others to accept one's own definition of it, is as absurd as to expect all humanity to use the same toilet brush.

Art teaches you the philosophy of life, and if you can't learn it from art, you can't learn it at all. It shows you that there is no perfection. There is light, and there is shadow. Everything is in half tint.

Our whole life is given to looking at little things. We refuse to see broadly, to grasp a whole.

This doing things to suit people! They'll hate you, and you won't suit them. Most of us live for the critic, and he lives on us. He don't sacrifice himself. He gets so much for a line for writing a criticism. If the birds should read the newspapers





STUDIO OF WILLIAM MORRIS HUNT, PARK SQUARE, BOSTON

*From a Photograph*





they would all take to changing their notes. The parrots would exchange with the nightingales, and what a farce it would be.

Some say that the "Age of Painting" is passed, the "Age of Sculpture" is passed, etc., as if painting and sculpture might not belong to all time. We shall not see another era of Greek sculpture. Probably not an era of painting just like what has been. But there are possibilities in the future. What is called the Age of Painting was a great wave which came and disappeared. But there may be others almost as great, although different. The truth is there are so many people looking back into the past that they would not see great things that might happen today. If Homer were to come here and sing, they would say, "Hold on. You're in our way. We're looking back into the Past."

One hundred years from now Turner will be counted among the greatest men who ever lived. His color is wonderful. He could carry the scale higher and farther than any one else. Could get dark without using black, or brown even. His color is iridescent. The Venetians could get such

color only by painting transparently. But Turner is solid, clear throughout.

Nobody ever did well without learning from those who had had opportunities to know what was good and great. Michelangelo, Titian, Raphael, were they self-taught? I rather guess *not*.

Art belongs to this age just as the air belongs to it. "Classic." Who would have said 2000 years ago that Millet and Delacroix would be classic? Give me the fellow that can find honey in the flower that grows. Talk about Hymettus. We have just as good material to make painters of as we have to make poets. The poets have had the libraries of the world to read, while the painters have had to expatriate themselves. Instead of taking down a dictionary they've had to take a steamer and go to Europe.

Some people have expressed themselves as discouraged in their expectation of finding any art in America, and have long since ceased to hope. Let us remember that art, like jelly, has been more easily recognized when cold. It has always ex-

isted in all nations, and the tradition will probably not die here.

You say, I told you yesterday to work in one way, today I tell you to work in another. Certainly, and tomorrow I shall probably suggest a third, if I think by tacking ship you can make headway. Don't hesitate to leave a point wherein you are strong and strengthen yourself in a direction where you are weak, then return with freshness and carry your strong point along. By being always careful, you will probably lose all freedom of movement, and come eventually to use only the tips of your fingers. A cat doesn't catch a mouse with her claws alone. She strikes out from the shoulder after making a bound from her hind feet. You must necessarily spoil a good deal of paper; therefore I beg of you, spoil it cheerfully; you will learn freedom of movement in so doing.

Convince yourself of the general form of an object. Swing the whole form upon your paper or canvas. Then amuse yourself by dividing it and subdividing it by details. Make your hull first. Then step your masts, and if you like, add a pen-

non. Never try to hang a head upon a nose. I know that the oak grows from the acorn, but the acorn contains the oak. Wing a chrysalis, and you have a butterfly. Add legs and head to the form of an egg, and you have at least one chicken, but you can't make one with a ticking full of feathers.

You can't even see a hair on a cat without losing sight of pussy! When the tree throws off its leaves it doesn't give up the right to appear in one simple form or mass against the sky—except to the squirrel who only deals with one branch at a time.

“In painting this head, shall I join the tones?” Don't ask me! I don't know how. I would go ten million miles on my knees to do it! We all want to know how things are done. Boston is a great place for receipts. There is a receipt for being scientific, one for being sentimental, another for being religious. But painting is something for which you can't get a receipt; so people say that their teachers are to blame, that they “don't impart enough. . . .” Should you grow discouraged at



WILLIAM MORRIS HUNT, BY MISS ROSE LAMB  
*Owned by Mrs. J. Malcolm Forbes*







your slow progress, try for a year to play a violin solo!

"Do you not think it requires as much intellect to be a great artist as to be a great statesman or writer?"

To be sure I do. When Rubens was acting minister at a foreign court he was asked if he did not sometimes amuse himself by painting. "No," he replied, "I am a painter who sometimes amuses himself with state affairs." He was chosen by his government, the Netherlands, as the most accomplished diplomatist of that country, in more missions than one. William Blake was sometimes called "Mad Blake." But those who were pleased to call him so, are today thought to have been idiotic. I believe that Shakespeare is the only name that the literary world brings forward as *claiming equality* with Michelangelo. "A disappointed man?" Pshaw! I know that when he had his plaster all wet and he was ready to put those designs on the Sistine ceiling, he was happy as no one else could be happy,—the happiness of

being almost a creator. Look at the Madonna in his Adam touched by Jehovah. All other Madonnas seem conscious by the side of this one. She is not even conscious of the Child, but looks far on into the future. Michelangelo's types are of the grandest. You see them now in Italy; in women washing, or in the market-places.

This is the age of the tongue and the ear! We listen, with hollow gaping awe, to a description of the Parthenon; build our temples by contract; pay for them in greenbacks; and send to England for stamped Johnny-cake ornaments and friezes, and pocket the difference! We learn a great deal about everything and very little about anything! Nothing is too thin for us! There is a market for more skim-milk than we can produce. The cream sours, and is given to the cat!

The Chinese say, "Economy is saving and spending at the same time." The Yankee thinks that economy is saving. If I don't tell what I know, what a pig I am! I might easily hide my knowledge from you, lest you—"Flood the market with pictures?" Yes, or I might selfishly fear that

you would do something better than I, when you know that I have always said that I wouldn't teach if I didn't think that some of you were going some day to do better work than I can do. How many men are there down town who are hoping that some clerk is going to be smarter than they are? It is only in art that the workers help each other. "But all artists would not do it." Then they are not true artists. If a man is so selfish as to wish to keep what he knows to himself, that man hasn't any soul to put on canvas. But we easily see where others don't do right. When I go about growling about Boston and her ideas of art, it is because I am not painting. When I'm hard at work I'm helping Boston to love art.

A man is nothing except in his relation to the other members of the human family. You keep young as long as you keep giving out. After you've received a thing it does you no good. It's the getting, the receiving, that does you good, not the keeping, the having. "Lend me a guinea," said a reckless spendthrift to Ben Franklin. "Here it is. Don't return it, but give it to some

one else. Then pass it on until it meets a knave."

Have you seen the Tanagra figures at the Art Museum? They are the gayest, most joyous little things, and full of life. They are like the work you ought to do in your two-hour sketch-clubs. "Like dolls?" Not a bit. For one thing dolls always have their arms stuck out, and all their fingers and nails very plainly made out, especially the nails. But these figures often are folding the cloak up to the chest with the arm, and there is no fussiness of detail. People might learn a great deal from them about feeling, and action, and grace.

The "Talks on Art" were written for mere students, but great artists read them. You may say they are contradictory; but they were addressed to different students. "Some needed hasty-pudding, some Albert Durer."

The publication of "Talks on Art" was brought about largely by an English artist, Mr. Lowes Dickinson, who was visiting James T. Fields in 1875. Among the many pictures of noted people







THE AMAZON

*Owned by Mr. E. C. Shaw*



which covered the walls of that famous home in Charles Street, was a photograph of Hunt's portrait of Judge Shaw. It attracted at once the attention of the Englishman, who asked the name of the artist, saying he must see the man who could paint like that, for it was a modern Velasquez. Hunt was not in the studio when Mr. Fields called with his distinguished guest. Casting about for some way of entertaining the visitor, Miss Knowlton showed him her manuscript notes of the Hunt "Talks," with which he was thoroughly delighted.

"Have it published at once, just as it is; and send me a dozen copies."

Hunt himself so disliked the idea of their being printed that it was only with the greatest difficulty that his objections were overcome by Mr. Dickinson and some intimate friends. Hunt felt they might be misunderstood by the public, and that parts of the book would arouse antagonism among literary people. He had talked freely with his pupils, showing them how rare was the art instinct in the community, and it was another matter to publish to the world the personalities involved in such

off-hand conversation. After a severe pruning, the manuscript was finally approved by Hunt, who was with difficulty restrained from destroying half of it.

So great was Mr. Dickinson's interest in the work, that he persuaded Messrs. Macmillan & Co. to issue an English edition in 1878. In the introduction, Mr. Dickinson wrote, "I believe them to contain the substance of the best practical teaching I know on the subject of painting."

Hunt received letters from many quarters commending the "Talks." A second series, partially revised by him, appeared in 1883, four years after Hunt's death. These little books have proved a mine of wealth to the art student, and are perhaps even better known in European studios than in our own country, having been translated into a number of foreign languages.

Their great value to individual artists is well illustrated by the following story, told by a young Boston artist.

"I had a copy of the 'Talks,' and a lot of us fellows used to meet in my room and read from its pages. They had tried to buy the book, but were



THE BATHERS  
*Museum of Fine Arts, Boston*



BOSTON DAYS OF WILLIAM MORRIS HUNT

everywhere told that it was no longer in print. One of our number, who came from British Guiana, wished so much to own it that he actually copied every word of the two series, saying that he was going home, and might never have another opportunity."





CHAPTER V

THE BOSTON FIVE  
THE PARK SQUARE STUDIO



## CHAPTER V

**I**T HAS been said that after a talk with the sculptor, J. Q. A. Ward, one felt that the rest of the world was asleep. The same might have been said of Hunt, for with his quick, alert mind, there went a keen sense of humor which gave a sharper edge to his ideas, and often manifested itself in moods of remarkable drollery. He was an adept in mimicry. When he began with voice, face and hands to reproduce an episode in which he had found amusement, he immediately took his audience captive, and before the impromptu performance was over, every one realized what a brilliant ornament to the stage had been lost in the painter. Probably no man in the country, certainly not in Boston, had so many ardent friends and followers, including both men and women, while with his pupils it is hard to say enough of the camaraderie which existed between himself and them. His name was a sort of war-cry. Every door was open to him,

and people would sit up till all hours of the night enjoying him and his talk.

Hunt was a frequent and always welcome visitor at the home of the publisher, James T. Fields, at 148 Charles Street. All the notables whose wit and wisdom enlivened and made historic that delightful "long room" looking out over the Charles, are recalled with unusual interest and charm in "Memories of a Hostess" by M. A. DeWolfe Howe. At one of the "Conversations" arranged for Emerson by Fields, Hunt and his wife, with Emerson and his daughter, Dr. Holmes, and Longfellow and his daughter Alice, made up the dinner-party. "After <sup>1</sup> dinner Mrs. Hunt went to the piano and played and sang. Finally he came, and they sang their little duets together, and afterward she sang a song with words by Channing about a pine tree, set to a scrap of a sonata by Helen Bell, and after that a touching German song with English words." At another time, "A Visit from Hunt. One of the

<sup>1</sup> "James T. Fields, Biographical Notes and Personal Sketches," by Mrs Annie A. Fields. By permission of Houghton, Mifflin Company, Publishers.



NEWBURY PASTURES  
*Owned by Mr. Walter S. Ballou*





most dramatic creatures who ever lived. He told a story of a student from the South who came to Harvard University with a colored servant. Returning to his rooms one night (or day) at four o'clock in the morning, he found a company of negroes leaning back in his chairs drinking his sherry and smoking his cigars. With a grace Hunt could not sufficiently admire, the young man walked through the rooms as if he did not see the occupants, whereat they all crumbled away, nobody knew where, only his one man remained, who as quick as thought, gathered the bottles under his coat, and when his master did look round, was furiously dusting the room with a feather duster. Hunt's mimicry of the whole scene was inimitable.

"He loves to tell stories of animals, especially one of going to a place in Paris, where the man had only a monkey and an elephant to exhibit. He was determined therefore to make the most of the show. He arrayed the elephant (who just fitted into the apartment, with no room at all left over,) with a napkin about him, as if he were dining; and the monkey, dressed as a *garçon de café*,

came dancing in with the plates, one after another. He would enter with long strides, flinging down the tin plate before the elephant with perfect nonchalance, so long as it contained salads and the like, but when it came to the nuts and raisins, his dance was altogether vertical, he being occupied with gobbling up the contents on the way. Finally, on arriving at the elephant, he would fling the empty plates before him with a grand air. In Hunt's hands this became a little drama, in which he played all the parts with infinite amusement.

"He gave J. for me a photograph of a marvelous picture which he calls his Persian Sybil Anahita. I see his wife in it, as in so many of his best works. 'I don't mean to do any more portraits,' he said; 'when I remember how I wasted time on an eyebrow because somebody's fourteenth cousin thought it ought to turn up a little more—it makes me mad.' "

Hunt became a member of the Saturday Club in 1869. He contributed his full share to the wise and witty discussions engaged in and his sunny, joyous nature imparted cheerfulness to all with whom he came in contact. He was now forty-five, though

his full, flowing beard, patriarchal in its silvery whiteness, its luxuriance and length, made him look much older, while his clear bronzed skin testified to his active temperament and out-door life much of the year.

The Great Boston Fire of November, 1872, broke in upon the complacent, prosperous life of the community with a terrific and crushing force, which it is hard to realize today, now that over fifty years have elapsed since the dread catastrophe took place. It brought about, however, some of the greatest material changes which have taken place in the history of Boston. The city prided itself not a little on its extensive wholesale district, newly built of brick and granite, the massive walls rising to what was considered a great height before the arrival of sky-scrapers. By a strange freak of fortune, in the upper floors of these substantial buildings, in what was believed to be safe keeping, was stored at the time an unusually large number of valuable works of art, a collection of armor, private libraries, and rich old household furnishings. In a number of cases the owners were in Europe. Many families

lost all their old family portraits by Copley and Stuart, not to mention artists of lesser celebrity. Five Copley portraits belonging to the Wainwright family, including one of the famous Rev. Jonathan Mayhew and his wife, who was a great belle in her day, were burned at the time, with the portrait of Gardiner Greene, painted by Copley in London. As the fire swept through Summer Street, the Mercantile Building fell before its onslaught, and Hunt's large studio with all its contents, his pictures, sketches and treasured souvenirs of his life abroad, was destroyed. It is said one large closet was filled with paintings by foreign masters, which had not even been shown to his intimate friends.

"Nest eggs for the children," he called them. Five or six examples of Millet were still in their original French frames. The loss of his own work was serious, many notable portraits in all stages of completion, and with these a large decorative canvas, fifty feet in length, on which was represented with much power, the Persian goddess of night, Anahita, borne on a rolling cloud, and driving three





GLOUCESTER HARBOR  
*Museum of Fine Arts, Boston*





horses abreast. Not a trace of the work remained. All subsequent paintings of the composition for the decoration of the Capitol at Albany were made from a small photograph which had been taken during the progress of the work.

The courage and energy which distinguished Hunt during his whole life were never more evident than at this time. Undaunted by his misfortune, he bravely took up his brush again, and a few years later held a remarkable exhibition, including portraits, genre and landscapes, in the fine large studio he had fitted up by rebuilding the upper stories of a house on the south corner of Park Square and Boylston Street. Hunt never indulged in the conventional furnishings of a painter's studio. He wanted rather a commodious, airy room with good light and abundant wall space. He would hang up some fine example of Japanese decoration for its lines and its flatness of planes, or throw over a chair a bit of richly colored drapery, but for his real inspiration he would take from his folio a photograph from Velasquez or Rembrandt. Of the latter,

Hunt said, "He was not simply a Dutchman. He painted as Shakespeare wrote—for the world."

"The Bathers," painted in the Park Square studio, is one of the most original and striking of all Hunt's works. It is almost the only example of the nude which Hunt executed, which is surprising since his early studies were in the direction of sculpture. It reveals in a marked degree the artist's delicacy and refinement in handling the human figure—in fact, it has been said by a competent critic, to be one of the three or four paintings of the nude executed in the nineteenth century which a Greek would have understood and admired. It betrays both Hunt's actual knowledge of sculpture, and intimate acquaintance with the best art of the past; but it has also a certain inevitableness distinguishing things seen in nature from all else. Hunt painted this picture with the single idea of delight in the possibilities of beautiful expression which the subject afforded, in the poise of the figure, the action of the body and limbs, suspended for an instant, now resting in perfect ease and balance, while the play of sunlight over the nude figure brought

out flesh tints of pearl and rose gleaming amid the shadow of the trees. Hunt was driving one afternoon when he saw two youths who were bathing in a secluded cove of the Charles River, one standing on the shoulders of the other, poising himself before a plunge into the water. The little scene impressed the artist so strongly that he drove quickly back to his studio and drew a small charcoal sketch of the subject. From this he made the painting which was acquired by the Worcester Art Museum in 1910, popularly known as the "Fairchild Hunt," from its original owner, Mrs. Charles Fairchild, of Boston. Hunt repeated the subject on a larger scale which is now in the Memorial Gallery at the Boston Museum of Fine Arts. Hunt's subordination of his skill in drawing for the purpose of giving prominence to some other artistic quality in his work, at times misled certain critics. Of his first painting of "The Bathers" he remarked to a friend, "I don't pretend that the anatomy of this figure is precisely correct. In fact, I know it is not. It's a little feminine but I did it from memory, without a model, and was chiefly occupied with the pose. I *do* think

the balancing idea is well expressed, and it is the fear of disturbing that which prevents my making any changes in the figure. I know that I could correct the anatomy, but if the pose were once lost I might never be able to get it again."

"On those occasions when the real Hunt in his full strength came out in his painting, it was usually because some chance reality of exceptional beauty compelled him to trust boldly to a sudden inspiration, and to express it at a white heat. Nevertheless one portrait like that of Chief Justice Shaw and one scenic piece like 'The Bathers' would be enough to keep his reputation enduring and to justify the conjuring power of his name still in Boston. Both works resemble each other in being painted with the utmost simplicity of means, and lightness of suggestive execution. Taken together they show almost the full range of Hunt's possibilities. Pervading the strong personal likeness of Judge Shaw is a stern revelation of legal Massachusetts at its best, by reason of the massive and just character depicted. 'The Bathers,' in graceful contrast and as the outcome of a rarer vi-





ANAHITA OR THE FLIGHT OF NIGHT, STUDY FOR THE CAPITOL AT ALBANY  
*Museum of Fine Arts, Boston*





sion, has the natural joyousness of a modern classic." <sup>1</sup>

Landscape painting always possessed a fascination for Hunt, and after the loss of his studio in the Mercantile Building, he devoted himself more and more to it. His earlier work was in a low brown key, for at that time Manet's famous saying that "light was the principal person in the picture," had not been given to the world. An effect of light was sometimes obtained by the juxtaposition of shadow, after the manner of the Dutch masters. Hunt would often say to his students, "Go out into the sunshine, and try to get some of its color and light. Then come back here and see how black we are all painting." As he worked more and more in the open, and his studies caught the opaline hues on sea and land, his landscapes showed breadth in handling light and color. A trip which he made to Florida in 1874 for rest and recreation, resulted in many beautiful charcoal drawings. His paintings of the St. John River, exquisite in color and permeated with the dreamy spirit of that region, were

<sup>1</sup> Worcester Art Museum Bulletin, vol. 6.

eagerly sought for, and aroused in him a new interest and enthusiasm for work out-of-doors.

In landscape painting, as in portrait painting, Hunt received at once a strong impression of his subject, which remained in his mind and to which he held fast as to a guide, omitting any details that might weaken its strength. He believed in painting his impressions, and had he lived in the later years of Monet and his disciples, he would surely have entered heartily into their aims, and gathered from them ideas of color-vibration, and yet differed from them all by a sort of natural elegance, or inborn refinement, and in his love for what is at the same time light and graceful and gladdening and wholesome.

In order to make his sketching tours in the most convenient manner, Hunt had planned the construction of a wagon or van in which could be carried not only a painter's ordinary outfit, but provisions, and long seats that might be utilized for sleeping bunks when occasion required. The van was covered, and drawn by two horses. It had been built at an expense of \$1600. His work was for him

such a deep and constant pleasure, that he counted neither pains nor expense to provide whatever would help him to arrive at the best results. In 1877 Hunt spent much of the summer in what was then the little fishing village of Kettle Cove on the North Shore, at that time forming a part of Gloucester. It has since become the fashionable summer resort of Magnolia. Hunt made over an old barn and carpenter's shop into a picturesque studio and carriage house, for the van and stalls were built for two or three horses. He had with him his assistant, Carter, and his driver, Tom. The barn was two stories in height, and the upper part was known as the "barracks," and half a dozen cot beds furnished seats by day and beds by night.

The celebrated "Gloucester Harbor" was painted in one afternoon, and Hunt returned to his studio in Magnolia in a most enthusiastic mood, declaring that he believed he had painted a picture with *light* in it. It proved indeed to be a splendid forerunner of that vigorous *plein air* school of American landscape painting which is today second to none in modern art. The picture was composed of

the simplest elements—a brilliant sky full of sun and air, reflected in an expanse of water, ruffled by a gentle breeze. In the distance, a town with its spires and masts of shipping. In the foreground, one of the picturesque old piers which artists delight to paint today, with some boats outlined sharply against the sunlit water. It is painted in a very light key, but the color is well sustained throughout. Hunt had indeed flooded the canvas with beams of heaven's own light, anticipating by many years the more important effects of the French Impressionists, both in their coloring and in their ability to suggest much by simple means, while his results were at times invested with a feeling for beauty which they failed to attain.

"Gloucester Harbor" was purchased by Mr. John L. Gardner of Boston for \$4000. When some one commented on the unusual price paid for the picture, as \$4000 for four hours' work, Hunt said, "\$4000 for four hours' work! It has taken me my life to paint that picture!"

When the Hunt Memorial Gallery was being brought together at the Museum of Fine Arts by



HORSES' HEADS

*Charcoal Drawing. Museum of Fine Arts, Boston*







Mrs. Horatio N. Slater, a daughter of the artist, Mrs. Gardner presented "Gloucester Harbor" to the Collection as her tribute to the great genius of the painter, and it now hangs among the other Hunt pictures where it can be enjoyed by all.

Gloucester, with its rare atmospheric effects and picturesque rocky shore, has since become the favorite haunt of artists from every part of the country, but its unrivaled charm was first discovered by our artist, Hunt, who "saw the picture in it," caught the spirit of the scene, and nearly fifty years ago, one summer afternoon, painted a radiant sky reflected in the waters of the old harbor, and with a flash of genius threw upon the canvas for the first time, all the glory of out-of-doors, its sunshine, wind and air. It is not too much to say that with all the advance of present landscape painting, no later artist has ever equaled it in this respect, much less surpassed it.

In the early summer of 1878, Hunt feeling the need of rest and recreation, visited Niagara Falls, and planned to go abroad before resuming his work in Boston for the winter. He did not take along

any part of his painting outfit, but the beauty and majesty of the Falls and the charm of the whole neighborhood was so irresistible that it had to be painted. He sent home for paints and canvas, and was soon hard at work sketching in oils and pastel. The series of paintings of the Falls were done with simplicity, breadth of perception and vigor of handling, which mark the great artist, and showed a marked advance over his previous work out-of-doors. One of the paintings was a large canvas, in which the great volume of water was rendered with power and impressiveness. Some of the smaller paintings were charming renderings of the opaline and rainbow tints of the mist.

It was while Hunt was working here that the incident occurred of the sick child, related by Miss Knowlton. His sister Jane, while buying some beadwork in a small shop, had been greatly distressed by hearing a sick child cry in the back room. On her return to their hotel, she told her brother how its screams had pierced her ears. "I believe," said Hunt, "that I can cure that child, and what is more, I am going to do it." It was



THE DISCOVERER, STUDY FOR THE CAPITOL AT ALBANY  
*Museum of Fine Arts, Boston*



half past nine o'clock in the evening, dark and raining. Asking for the location of the shop, he hurried off. At one o'clock in the morning he returned, tired and wet but very happy. "How's your child?" he was asked. "She's all right. I left her sleeping, and I tell you, that kind of work pays." Was there ever a truer knight errant! It was at Niagara that another call came to him, unexpected and unlooked for, a call to do a great public work, in the toil and joy of which his career culminated. He was commissioned to adorn with two large mural paintings, 16 x 45 feet, the Assembly Hall of the new Capitol at Albany. The work was noble and worthy, and it stirred and inspired him to his greatest achievement.





CHAPTER VI

A GREAT CALL  
AND A GREAT SACRIFICE



## CHAPTER VI

**M**URAL decoration in this country in 1878 was still in its infancy. John La Farge received his commission to decorate Trinity Church, Boston, in 1876. The painting of such an interior so as to present a scheme of artistic unity, was considered an undertaking entirely new in character, and accompanied with many difficulties. Assisted by twelve or more young artists, among whom were F. D. Millet, Saint Gaudens and Edwin Champney, La Farge accomplished the work with surprising success in four months.

The commission to paint two large mural compositions for the Assembly Chamber of the Capitol at Albany offered Hunt an opportunity to develop his highest powers and realize the great dream of his life, the desire to paint a large picture embodying his conception of the Coming of Light.

As early as 1846, his brother Leavitt, who had traveled in the East, had sent him a translation of

a Persian poem called "Anahita," describing the course of the goddess through the heavens, dispelling the darkness. The subject at once took possession of Hunt's mind and numberless studies and sketches were made as opportunity occurred. He had settled upon a general idea of the composition and the great picture was well under way at the time of the Boston Fire. Subsequent paintings of the composition were chiefly made from photographs taken before the fire.

The story of Columbus was selected for the other great panel. While studying with Couture in Paris, he had wished to paint the great discoverer voyaging over the unknown ocean accompanied only by Faith, Hope and kindred spirits, and had made many drawings of the subject.

The record of the execution of these two subjects to fit the great panels in the Chamber, each to be 16 x 45 feet, with figures of colossal size, is one of almost superhuman effort. It was an undertaking for which any artist, however skilled in mural painting, would have required a year for its execution. It had been arranged that Hunt should com-



PROFILE OF COUTURE  
*Bronze. Museum of Fine Arts, Boston*





mence the work by the first of September. He had painted the two compositions on large canvas and was ready and eager to begin his great task at the earliest moment, when he received word that the necessary staging could not be put in place until the middle of October. This would allow him less than sixty days in which to complete the decorations before the opening of the Assembly Chamber on December 21st. At first Hunt expected only to sketch in broadly the designs, and leave them curtained during the inauguration. Once launched upon the work, however, nothing could hold him back. He was in a high state of mental exaltation, which took no note of bodily fatigue, and gloried in the thought that he had found in this great work in which he was engaged, the fullest life in which were employed every thought, capacity and action.

He wrote to a friend in Boston, "I can tell you, it is like sailing a seventy-four, or riding eight horses in a circus. It fills one's lungs to breathe in front of such spaces. The figure of Columbus, or the Discoverer, is eleven feet from his crown to

the boat where his shins disappear. His hand is broader than this page is long. The scaffolding is spacious, and the bridge connecting the two is about seven feet wide and seventy feet long; so you see that everything is in proportion, and it is delightful to work forty feet from the floor. It will be a great mortification if we don't succeed. Just think of a twin mortification, 16 x 45!"

Hunt received encouragement and inspiration from the workmen who would come up to the scaffolding and ask if they might see the pictures. They said that while they were proud to be working on such a building, they were prouder still to see his work going on. "I never felt so big in my life as I did when they asked me if they could come again. They didn't come around to grumble in Greek, but to help me along, and that is what I want. It's great fun to be one of a gang. There are ever so many workmen down below our scaffolding, working while we do. We come here at nine every morning, climb the stairs, and don't go down until six in the evening. Have a light dinner brought us near the middle of the day. There's plenty of ex-

ercise, for one must keep going down the step-ladder and running away to see how the panels look. I have two step-ladders on rollers. We have everything we could desire. They insist upon giving us a carpenter, whom we employ washing our brushes. They are as careful of us as possible, never letting a workman come up stairs without some one to look after him. We don't use very large brushes, not bigger than my wrist. The figures are about twice the size of life. The women's arms are the size of a man's leg, and the Discoverer is twelve feet high. But you get entirely used to that large scale, and don't think of it and it's fun! It's fatiguing of course; but it's the things that bore you that kill you, not the fatiguing ones, and I'm never bored here at all. It don't take life out of me half as much as thinking whether the family would like her eyes blue or not in a portrait! Two months is a horribly short time, but I can only do what I can. The paintings won't be like anything else. I don't know what people will think of them, but that's not my lookout. It is an entirely new kind of work for me, different from anything else. I have

to be very decided, for one thing, otherwise the work won't be seen from the very great distance. To disengage the clear figures from the light sky, I have to use in places a *brun-rouge* line as thick as your finger.

"Every mistake or weakness 'carries' perfectly. Then I have to paint in a key which though very colored, is very light,—far lighter than my studies of the composition, because I don't expect to have much light on my work. The abyss of darkness in 'The Flight of Night' is really not much darker than brown paper. On a rainy day we have to work by torchlight. My greatest anxiety is to know what the effect will be when the window screens and all the scaffolding come down irrevocably, and I see my work for the first time as it is to be seen! It's a beautiful hall, and I have to work with one eye on my picture, and two on its surroundings, to make my work take the right place in it. Ever since I began I have tried to keep both pictures so together that if the scaffolding were taken down at any moment they should be intelligible as far as they went. The architect is very much pleased with





MARGUERITE  
*Museum of Fine Arts, Boston*





them, and says that, even if I were to leave them now, his dreams would be more than fulfilled."

Looking down forty feet from the scaffolding to the floor below upon the hundreds of workmen was to Hunt a thrilling sight. "What a big thing a great building is. Think of the crowd of varied interests that are represented in this room. Think of all those men and their families, thinking and working, year in and year out, all to one end—the making of this Capitol. People grumble and whine about the money which is thrown away upon it; but I tell you that it is an immense work, and worthy of any State or nation. It is the greatest thing which this State has ever done, and a very sensible way to spend money. Do you think that it is throwing away money to keep fifteen hundred skilled workmen in one place, and doing one thing? No, sir, it is a good investment, and the more it is done, the richer we shall be. It ought to go on forever. I never felt before what a power the united efforts of hundreds has upon the mind. Just think of being a part of it. Here I am in my own world, and I want to stay here.—It is getting as

easy to paint as to handle a stick of charcoal. Mural painting gives one great facility."

The lunettes were completed in time for the inauguration, and were considered a great triumph of art. They were painted in oils on the stone, broadly and boldly, without too much attention to details, and fitted admirably in their places. The figures were good in scale, the compositions were original and effective both in line and spot, and the color, always Hunt's strong point, was particularly fine.

On account of the scaffolding Hunt had never had an opportunity to view the effect of his work from below. After the removal of the staging, Hunt stood with some friends upon the floor, almost fearing to turn his glance towards the two designs into which he had put so much time, labor and thought. His satisfaction was instant and complete. In the supreme moment of the enterprise he had not been found wanting. His success was undoubted. The frescoes challenged favorable comparison, in their decorative beauty and their poetic, mythical conception, with similar works of the best Italian artists, though representing something en-

tirely original in the history of mural decoration. Almost all modern mural painting can be studied in its relation to the work of masters like Tiepolo, Veronese or Puvis de Chavannes, and Hunt knew his old masters as few men did, but in these decorations he expressed himself in a manner recalling no particular master.

The fresco of "The Discoverer" shows in the center of the picture a barge, the bow rising on the crest of the wave, in which stands an idealized figure of Columbus, twelve feet in height, wearing a heavy cloak and Genoese cap. He gazes steadfastly towards the west. Behind him is the winged figure of Fortune, her left hand holding the rudder, while with her right she spreads a sail of rosy hue. Hope clings to the prow of the boat, while Science holds a scroll at the voyager's feet. The types of womanhood in the symbolic figures are noble. The whole scene is painted in a low, quiet key of twilight, the tints of sea and sky, from which the afterglow of sunset has almost faded, are neutral.

There is a grandeur and spirit about "The Flight of Night" that awakens enthusiasm even in the

small sketch, and on the large scale on the walls of the Capitol it must have been exceedingly impressive. In the foreground, three superb horses, black, white, and bay, guided by a man bearing an inverted torch, draw forward a mass of gray cloud in the shape of a throne, upon which is seated the goddess of Night. Behind her is the crescent moon. At one side, the cloud has formed itself into a hollow in which sleep a mother and child, with a canopy upheld by a cherub. The fine sweep of lines, the large masses of light and shade, the gray tones touched here and there with brilliant hues, all formed a picture of unusual interest. The horses, for which Hunt made a spirited model in clay, are full of fine action, and are well placed in relation one to the other. He was extremely fond of horses, and felt that he understood their beauty and character, but found great difficulty in establishing the action of the splendid black horse in the middle. He knew what its fiery and untamable movement ought to be, but could not quite satisfy himself until he had seen, while on a visit to a friend who owned fine horses, a big, black horse





PORTRAIT OF A LADY  
*Museum of Fine Arts, Boston*





plunging high in the air in an effort to break away from his groom.

The work was a triumph of art, and further decorations for the Capitol by Hunt, were proposed, the sum of \$100,000 being voted for the purpose by the New York Legislature. Hunt was planning subjects for the different wall spaces when the veto of Governor Robinson put an end to the scheme. So much money had already been spent on its erection, that he considered more ornateness "a wrongful waste of the public money." As it was, the building had fallen into the hands of a political ring, and the poor construction was revealed in the leaking of the massive roof and the settling of the whole structure. Before ten years had passed, great portions of Hunt's paintings flaked off, and what remained was walled up behind the rebuilding necessary to avert utter ruin.

Efforts were made by Boston friends of the artist to save the frescoes by having the stones sawed from the wall and set up in the Museum of Fine Arts. It would involve an outlay of \$7000, and there was a question as to the legality of the act.

No one stood ready to take the lead in the matter, and Hunt's last and greatest work was forever lost from view. If he had been living at the time, undoubtedly the paintings would have been preserved. The great teacher who did so much for American art, died at the Isles of Shoals on September 8th, 1879, probably from overwork of the previous year. One of Hunt's characteristic remarks about art, comes to mind in connection with his untimely death at the age of 55 years. "Queer old thing, painting is, but we would rather die doing it than live doing anything else."

When it became evident that the paintings at Albany were doomed, the widow of the artist wrote this appreciative tribute for private circulation among her friends:—

"These works seem not to have been understood by the public, and as they are already doomed to fade forever from our sight, through the dampness and slow settling of the Capitol building, these few words have been written to act only as humble servitors which may help to keep the deep symbolic meaning of them green in the memories of our

people, and bear testimony to the genius of our poet-painter, William Morris Hunt.

"The two paintings are allegorical representations of the great opposing forces which control all nature, and were the cumulative work of the painter's mind from the years 1842 and '43, till it culminated in these remarkable pictures, completed in the years 1878 and '79. They must absolutely be taken in conjunction to be rightly understood, as each is the complement of the other.

"They represent Negative and Positive, Night and Day, Feminine and Masculine, Darkness and Light, Superstition and Science, Pagan and Divine Thought, Self and Altruism; and Youth may find here as grand a lesson as Homer and the ancients ever taught.

"Anahita, Persian goddess of the moon and night, represents negative or feminine force. Anahita, driven forth from her realms of fantasy and unreality, impelled by the dawn of civilization, plunges, with her airy oar, into the dark and hidden caverns of superstition and barbaric thought. The slave, who bears an inverted torch, holds back the

horses that Anahita may look her last upon the kingdom she so soon must relinquish. The horses obey her will without the ribbons by which, in earlier sketches, they were guided. This suggests the power of mind over matter. By the side of the cloud-chariot float, in a dark-blue transparent ether, the sleeping forms of a human mother and child. This vision hints to the queen of night of other worlds than hers, where love and rest belong; and as she hurries on her course between contending forces of day and night, light and darkness, a look of human doubt surprises the beauty of her Pagan countenance, and renders her as tragic and typical a figure as that of the Columbus, and the fitting counterpart.

“Columbus represents positive or masculine force. Lonely, and led by Faith, Science, Hope and Fortune, Columbus crosses the waters of Destiny. Faith, nearly engulfed, leads on this spirit band, breasting the waves, while with one arm she hides her eyes. Hope stands at the prow, and prophesies fulfilment. Science holds the chart or scroll that Columbus may be guided by it. For-



GIRL READING  
*Museum of Fine Arts, Boston*





tune is at the helm, but with wings half outspread. She is placed behind Columbus, which is very significant. Her left hand grasps the tiller which guides this whale-shaped craft. Around her right arm is wreathed the rude sail. Storm winds fill it full, and drive them onward to the West. The chains are visible beside the solitary figure; but Columbus peers with intensity of will into the future and ignores them. The central figure has no theatrical posture-making character of the conqueror; but is, as it were, bowed down with the greatness of his mission, while neither danger nor the chains of ignominy can divert him from his heart's desire and conviction.

"Both these paintings represent the Thought of their period in the world's history. It is not without intention that both seem suspended between faith and doubt. She, with the intensity of feminine sympathy; he, with the calm majesty and patience of manhood. Both are moving to their destiny, and both are meant to teach a fundamental and eternal truth, though canvas and even stone shall crumble away."

BOSTON DAYS OF WILLIAM MORRIS HUNT

The first adequate display that had ever been made of the work of Hunt was the Memorial Exhibition held at the Boston Museum of Fine Arts, from November 11th, to December 15th, 1879. It was in every respect the highest tribute to the artist and the man, representing every stage in his career from the time when he entered Couture's studio, down to the very last stroke of his pencil, a little charcoal sketch executed at Appledore only three days before his death. The exhibition included two hundred oil paintings, and one hundred and nineteen sketches and drawings in charcoal and pastel. A medallion head of Couture, a marble bust of Psyche restored from the antique, a study in plaster of the three horses for "The Flight of Night," and a series of cameos cut while a student at Harvard, bore evidence to Hunt's bent for sculpture. A stranger, not knowing the circumstances and being suddenly ushered into the exhibition, would never for a moment have imagined that this was the work of a single brain and hand alone.

Not only the variety of subjects, embracing historical compositions, portrait and landscape paint-

ing, which Hunt attempted, but the diversity in color and technical treatment in all his work, is in itself a sufficient cause of surprise. A man of less universal nature would have more easily found one special range of subjects, and one single way of expression. Owing to the extreme quickness of his makeup, and his subtle perception of the hidden relations of things, Hunt felt the need of many different modes of speech in recording the swift messages which nature and life bore to him. All through his work we encounter constant experiments, on account of his readiness to seize upon advantages worked out for him by others, and an ever-increasing wish to find a universal method of expression. Some of Hunt's best achievements are undoubtedly to be found in his work from 1850 to 1860. The exquisite delicacy and finish are so remarkable in the pictures painted within that period, that even the stronger execution and more marked individuality which his later works display hardly compensate for its loss. In spite of Hunt's close association with every phase of French art and his love for the old masters, we feel in everything he

BOSTON DAYS OF WILLIAM MORRIS HUNT

did, the reflection of the American point of view. Neither extravagant nor morbid, not passionate nor impetuous, a common sense view, so to speak, of things, which is as conspicuous in every good American painter's work today, as in the formative years of our art with which Hunt had so much to do.

The last exhibition of Hunt's works in Boston was held in the Park Square Studio in January, 1880, the entire collection to be sold at auction in Horticultural Hall on the afternoons of February 3rd and 4th. A fund of over \$20,000 had been raised for the purchase of a number of the paintings to be placed together in a room at the Museum of Fine Arts to be called the Hunt Memorial Room. The bidding was brisk, and there was much competition, the attendance being large and enthusiastic. At the close of the sale, however, it was found that several of the most important works had been withdrawn. Among these were the paintings which had been selected for the Hunt Room. The money was returned to the subscribers, and the project for a memorial to the great artist fell through. The pictures reserved from the sale were sent to London and



BIRD ON THE CHERRY BOUGH

*Drawn for one of his Children with a Coal from the Hearth  
Museum of Fine Arts, Boston*







exhibited in the Grafton Gallery in 1881. On the return of the pictures to Boston they were stored for a number of years. The majority of Hunt's pictures were privately owned, and few ever found their way into the market, and when visitors from a distance asked to be shown the works of an artist of whom they had heard so much, it was impossible to give them an adequate idea of the character and quality of his work.

In 1914, Mrs. Horatio N. Slater, the youngest daughter of the artist, with the concurrence of the Trustees of the Museum of Fine Arts, had constructed at her own expense over the Hunt Memorial Library, a charming little gallery designed by the architects, Hunt & Hunt, of New York, nephews of the painter.

The ante-room to the gallery is enriched with hangings of beautiful tooled Spanish leather and Flemish wood-carvings from an old house in Belgium. No more admirable way of perpetuating Hunt's name and fame could have been devised than in this Gallery, where are shown paintings and drawings by Hunt, which the Museum owns, paint-

BOSTON DAYS OF WILLIAM MORRIS HUNT

ings permanently deposited by Mrs. Slater, including the "Gloucester Harbor" which was given her for this purpose by Mrs. John L. Gardner, and paintings lent by the Hunt Estate and by individuals.

The Collection ranges from the large and brilliantly colored study for the "Anahita" decoration at Albany, to little charcoal drawings and lithographs. The deep-toned "Fortune Teller" has become mellow with the years. It was painted in Paris while Hunt was still with Couture. The "Marguerite" is a replica of the original which was exhibited in the Salon of 1852, and was one of the ten pictures selected by the emperor, Louis Napoleon, for purchase, but it had been previously engaged by an American. It is airy and luminous with refinement and sweetness in the figure. Standing amid the yellow grain she plucks the petals from a daisy with all the daintiness and grace of a duchess instead of a gleaner in the fields. Hunt had not yet come under Millet's strong and rugged personality, nor when he was drawn to Millet's ideals did he ever lose for an in-



BUTTERFLIES  
*Charcoal Drawing. Museum of Fine Arts, Boston*



stant his own inborn elegance of expression. The portraits in the Gallery are distinguished by their warm vitality. That of a dark-eyed lady in black, standing against a rich background of brazen yellows deepening to burnished gold, is so modern in its treatment as to suggest Monet. The painter has used his palette knife as freely as any Impressionist, and indicated broadly the figure in its flowing robe, but the features are well-defined with a perfection of modeling in significant contrast to the cursory treatment of the whole. Hunt's broad spirit, pure style, and fine mastery of his art, triumphed over what the modern age finds "old fashioned" in American painters of fifty years ago. He loved things genuinely human and alive, and seized upon essentials in art. The incipient young artists in the school of the Museum, to whom Hunt is perhaps only a name, may discover here what a great portrait-painter there was in Boston before the days of John Singer Sargent, the wizard who has bewitched the younger generation of would-be artists. Hunt's charcoal drawings are as fine things of the kind as have been produced in any country,



the coal always being used as if it were color and objects treated as patches of light and dark, but never as lines. Many carefully studied drawings for portraits are quite as valuable as the paintings themselves. Hunt held strongly that one may get from a few moments with a bit of charcoal more practical hints as to the handling of a subject than are sometimes obtained by hours of painting, and may possibly discover also that he is attempting something that he cannot do at all.

"Painting" he would say, "is vulgar by the side of a fine charcoal drawing. Imagination and suggestion are everything in art. The less imitation the more suggestion. Color is in the direction of imitation and is prose instead of poetry. Harmony is the great thing to strive for and one is surer of this in black and white."

The life-size drawing of Miss Claffin, made on smooth canvas, with charcoal, is a pure and beautiful work of art, and is judged by some to be a masterpiece among the portraits of the Collection. The young girl is dressed in white muslin of



the fashion of the time. There is no attempt at picturesqueness, but the profile and the girlish figure are beautifully drawn, and the whole impression is of a lovely creation that has sprung like a flower from the artist's own emotion.

Among the figure subjects in color the "Girl Reading," and the study for the "Girl with the Kitten," are perhaps the most to be commended. Hunt ranged over the whole field of art, and everything that he did, even if slight and incomplete, was at least extremely artistic. His best pictures illustrate the Emersonian aphorism that "The best of beauty is a finer charm than skill in surfaces, in outlines, or rules or art can teach, namely, a radiation from the work of art of human character, a wonderful expression through stone, or canvas, or musical sound, of the deepest and simplest attributes of our nature."

Hunt broke away from tradition and was courageous enough to paint what he saw and felt. In the art of this country he was among the first to discover its possibilities, and with unflagging zeal and

energy he taught that art is not an amusement, not a mere ornament of our cities, or something to be shut away in galleries, but to be fostered and loved as a great humanizing and ennobling energy.

Mrs. Sarah W. Whitman, whose rare personality and remarkable gifts gave her leadership in Boston circles, was one of Hunt's most talented pupils. She has said of him: "It would be difficult to describe justly the force and brilliancy of his power. His presence was full of inspiration, his criticism, vigorous and unsparing, was always helpful, and in the best sense sympathetic. The instruction he gave had that fine perception which comes from equal knowledge of the lessons taught, and the scholar who learns, so that while his maxims were of universal bearing, each student felt a subtle adaptation in them to her special need or capacity.

"His works bore witness to his power of expressing the fullness of inner feeling, to the strength, the variety, the subtlety of his genius. Even what is called the moral passion of America has a place in his art. His works, from beginning to end, are



WILLIAM MORRIS HUNT AT HIS EASEL  
*From a Photograph. Museum of Fine Arts, Boston*



deeply, profoundly moral; dealing with human action or contemplation on a plane almost austere in its seriousness and its dignity.

"We must ascribe to Hunt the first place among our earlier portrait-painters. One cannot look at his work, stretching over a space of thirty years, without feeling that the quality was not only not exhausted, but perhaps only half expressed. One apprehends a rich reserve. Hunt stands in a small and radiant company. Here in his own country there are only a few names that may be spoken with his. In Boston he was the fountain-head of art-feeling and thought. He brought to it the wisdom of European masters. He gave his life for it.

"Happily for us his works remain; and to those among whom he lived there remains also the glowing remembrance of a nature high, generous, and true,—of gifts so noble and of a presence so inspiring that the very memory seems still, even as he seemed, a splendor among shadows.

"Amid all the complexities of his existence, there is also that fine simplicity in his life which comes from one abiding determination, one enduring



desire; a single thread of purpose, on which are strung the failures and successes of his swift career."

Hunt himself thus sums up the mission of the artist:

"Artists are supposed to pass their lives in earnest endeavor to express through the medium of paint or pencil, thoughts, feelings, or impressions which they cannot help expressing, and which cannot possibly be expressed by any other means. They make use of material means in order to arrive at this end. They tell their story—the story of a day, an impression of a character, a recollection of a moment, or whatever, more or less clearly or well, as they are more or less capable of doing. They expose their work to the public, not for the sake of praise, but with a feeling and a hope that some human being may see in it the feeling that has passed through their own mind in their poor and necessarily crippled statement. The endeavor is honest and earnest, if almost always weakened by over conscientiousness or endeavor to be understood. . . . Your work is exhibited, not with the



intention of injuring any of the human race. It is a dumb, noiseless, silent story, told, as best it may be, by the author to those whom it may concern. And it does tell a story. Not to *everybody*. But to *somebody*."













WYOMING MUSEUM LIBRARY  
ND237.H9 S5  
Shannon, Martha A./Boston days of Willa  
STACKS  
3 2790 00002 7043



